FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PETER.

EXPOSITORY LECTURES

ON THE

FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PETER.

BY THE

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ST. PETER BELONGS TO THE SCHOOL, OR, TO SPEAK MORE CORRECTLY, IS THE LEADER OF THE SCHOOL, WHICH AT ONCE VINDICATES THE UNITY OF THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL, AND PUTS THE SUPERIORITY OF THE LATTER ON ITS TRUE BASIS, THAT OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT.

F. C. COOK.

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T. S.

It is not needful to pursue his history here, and my limits will not permit it. References to many of the circumstances of his life occur in the First Epistle, and also in the second, and to these I have adverted in the expositions.

The genuineness of the First Epistle has never been disputed. It was probably written about the year 63, "at which period Peter had found," says Neander, "a suitable field of exertion in the Parthian empire." It is difficult to summarise the contents of the Epistle, as the writer lays down no particular plan; but, following Steiger, Alford, and others, I have indicated the general line of thought, and I need only say here that the Epistle is a most precious portion of the New Testament Scriptures, and has ever been deemed such by spiritually minded men.

During a ministry of nearly forty years I have frequently preached from the Epistles of St. Peter; but the following Lectures are the result of my maturest thoughts, as they have all been written, or re-written, recently. In preparing them for the press, I have been greatly indebted to Fronmüller's Commentary (Clark), to Alford's Greek Testament, to Archbishop Leighton's admirable exposition, and, in part, to the elaborate work of Dr. J. Brown. I met recently with an old folio of John Rogers, of Dedham, Essex, 1657, and also with the Lectures of Dr. Lillie, New York and London, 1870. The former is a scarce book, very rugged in style, but full of practical lessons; the latter is a learned and thoughtful work, and deals with St. Peter's two Epistles.

I have given the text in a revised translation, formed after Alford and other scholars, compared with the Greek. The brief critical notes will, perhaps, be helpful to ministers and students; and to the end of each lecture I have appended a few *thoughts of other minds*, culled (with few exceptions directly) from a variety of works, some of which are rarely met with. These the general reader will perhaps find valuable.

These discourses are suggestive rather than full. Many of them might have been divided and expanded; and on numerous points much more might have been said with advantage. Particularly on Chapter iii. 18, 22, and iv. 1-6, I might have dwelt at greater length, especially as the views I have advanced on our Lord's descent into Hades are different from those which many other expositors have adopted. I have avoided controversy, however, as much as possible, and I am content to leave these questions here to be pondered by thoughtful minds. I will only add that never has my own spirit been so impressed with a sense of the fearful danger of the unconverted in Christian lands, as whilst I have been engaged in the study of these two Epistles. "The times of this ignorance God overlooked," said St. Paul to the men of Athens, in which word lie treasures of mercy for such as lived in them, observes Alford, truly. "But now He commandeth all men everywhere," through the preaching of the Gospel, "to repent." What, then, if they do not, and will not repent? What if they reject the mercy offered them, and put away from them eternal life? They must be *lost;* and if there is any meaning in that word, I can entertain no hope either that they will ever cease to be, or that they will ever be restored to the favour and fellowship of God. Let preachers be careful how they flatter, with false expectations, the scorners and triflers of the present age

T. S.

EXPOSITORY LECTURES

ON THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PETER.

I.

THE SALUTATION.

"Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to the elect strangers of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied"—(Chap. i., v. 1-2).

NEARLY all the epistles of the New Testament commence with a friendly greeting. Addressed, for the most part, to Christian believers, they speak to them in kind and gentle words; and thus they win attention from the first, and allure the minds of their readers to listen with pleasure to their varied contents. It would be gratifying to know something of the manner in which the autograph of this, or any other Epistle, was received by those to whom it was sent. It was conveyed by the hand of Silvanus (ch. v. 12), first to a number of believers in Pontus; and the messenger would probably gather them together, and say: I have brought you a letter from Peter, of whom you have heard, as the oldest of the twelve Apostles, and it is to be read to you, and then sent on to the Churches of other provinces; but you will be permitted to take a copy

of it, and then it must be returned to me. Shall I read it? he would ask; and everyone would be silent as he commenced the Epistle, and read, without any comment, the opening words.

Such a salutation—so kind, gentle, and catholic—would at once arrest the ear, and we doubt not that many would listen to the close of the letter with deep emotion, with intense interest, and with holy joy.

In our opening lecture we must, of course, look at this salutation. For, indeed, it is addressed to us, and to the Churches of Christ to the end of time. We shall, therefore, find in it something worthy of our deepest consideration; and it will, in some respects, prepare the way for the exposition which will follow, of this inspired letter.

I. TO WHOM IS IT ADDRESSED?—*Our* version reads: "To the strangers scattered throughout Pontus,"—"elect according to the foreknowledge of God," etc. But literally the words are, "to the elect strangers [or sojourners] of the dispersion."[1] Following, however, the order of the words in the English translation we will speak of them:

1. As strangers of the dispersion, or strangers scattered. The expression means: Jews who were not at home; Jews who had been scattered in different lands; Jews who were

[1] ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις διασπορᾶς. The exact meaning of the first word is *sojourners*. In ch. ii. 11, it is rendered "pilgrims," as also in Heb. xi. 13. It occurs only in these places in the N. Test.; but cf. Gen. xxiii. 4; Ps. xxxix. 12. On the second word see next note.

not denizens of Palestine,[1] but were living in strange countries, the names of which are here given. But they were Christian Jews—Jews who had believed in Jesus as the Messiah, and had carried with them into other lands their faith and hope in the verities of the Gospel. Not, however, to Jewish Christians only was this Epistle sent, but to all Christians dwelling in those provinces, for, in a spiritual sense, all were strangers and pilgrims in the earth, as believers in Christ always and everywhere confess themselves to be (ch. ii. 11). The world is not their home. They are but sojourners in it for a few short years, and hence with staff and scrip they pursue their way, looking for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God (Heb. xi. 10). There have been many dispersions of Christians, from the one which took place after the stoning of Stephen (Acts viii. 4), to those of our own times. Persecution has scattered them, war has scattered them, famine has scattered them; but as the wind bears upon its bosom the seeds of valuable plants and trees, and drops them on some distant shore where they germinate, and spring up and produce their various fruits, so have scattered Christians been as seed in the lands of their dispersion, and many a harvest waves to-day

[1] διασπορᾶ was a phrase which designated the Jews living in Gentile lands (John vii. 35; James i. 1). There is no doubt, however, that many Gentile Christians were associated with these Jews, and were, therefore, included in St. Peter's address.

where once there was nought but barrenness and death.

The provinces here mentioned were all situated in Asia Minor,[1] and several of these churches were founded by the Apostle Paul. This, however, did not matter to St. Peter. Whether he knew these Christians personally, or whether he had ever visited any of these countries himself, does not appear, though tradition says he did; but so catholic was his spirit that he was constrained to address to them this letter; nor did he suppose for a moment that he was encroaching on the field of St. Paul's labours, for they were one in Christ, though he was the Apostle of the circumcision, and St. Paul, more particularly, the Apostle to the Gentiles. We shall hereafter see that St. Peter had read some of the writings of St. Paul, and that he quoted from them; and thus, though the two Apostles differed on one occasion (Gal. ii. 11-14), they were subsequently united in mind and heart, and sought equally to edify and to bless all the Churches of their common Lord.

2. But these strangers were the elect of God.[2] If others

[1] *Pontus* was so called from the Black Sea, on which it borders towards the north (Acts xviii. 2). *Galatia*, the country of the Gauls, lay to the west of it (Acts xvi. 6), *Cappadocia* to the south. Asia was the province which included the maritime districts of Mysia, Lydia, and Caria, with part of Phrygia (Acts xvi. 6-8). *Bithynia* lay to the north-east of Mysia. Perhaps other provinces of Asia Minor, though not mentioned here, also received copies of this letter.

[2] The Codex Sin reads "to the elect and sojourners." ἐκλεκτοῖς καὶ παρεπιδήμοις.

did not know them, He did. If they were not at home in their earthly dwellings, they were at home in Christ, their Saviour and their Head. But what means the word here? Does it refer to an absolute and unconditional election of these Christians to eternal life? Such is the interpretation put upon the word by the followers of Augustine, Calvin, and many other Church teachers; but here, at least, it is otherwise defined. It is an election "unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ;" and, indeed, throughout the New Testament its primary signification is God's choice of nations or of individual men to the enjoyment of special privileges, with a view to their eternal salvation if those privileges are rightly used. It is an election according to the foreknowledge of God—that foreknowledge which sees the end from the beginning, which embraces all the events of time, which is acquainted with the actions, lives, and motives of all men; and which, therefore, can never be taken by surprise. But God's foreknowledge is not fore-determination. It does not interfere with human free agency. It does not deal with men as with beings who have no moral responsibility. It does not say to this man or another, "I have chosen you to salvation of my own absolute will, and saved you shall be whether you will or not." God does indeed bestow the blessings of initial salvation upon men without their choice, but they may abuse those blessings, and thus forfeit the ultimate and eternal salvation which was put

within their reach. Hence election is not absolute, not final; or, in so far as it is absolute, it is an election to temporal privileges only; and, if it becomes final, it is because those privileges have been rightly valued and employed (2 Pet. i. 10).

This election is "*in*—ἐν—sanctification of the Spirit."[1] The Holy Spirit is the efficient worker by whose gracious influences men are led to repentance, faith, and holiness; and, in the sanctification which He imparts, they live as in a new element, purer far than the mountain air (2 Thess. ii. 13). The fruit is obedience—the obedience of faith, which delights in the law of God, and keeps it, not by constraint, but with holy gladness and exulting joy. As far as the believer, sanctified by the Spirit, knows God's will, he does it. He may sometimes err in judgment, but he will not deliberately and consciously disobey a single precept of the Divine law. But may he not be surprised into a fault? Yes; and he will also make discoveries of the exceeding broadness of God's command, and thus he will be conscious of his shortcomings, and of his need of the atoning blood. And just here it is introduced, for the Apostle adds: "And sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." By the sprinkling of the blood upon his conscience and his heart the believer

[1] ἐν ἁγιασμῷ πνεύματος cf. 2 Thess. ii. 13, where the same expression is used, and in our version is again rendered, but erroneously, *through* sanctification of the Spirit.

is admitted into covenant with God, as were the Israelites when Moses sprinkled the blood upon the people, and said: "Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words" (Exod. xxiv. 8). But the Apostle refers here to the purifying power of that blood, in virtue of which the believer, by its continuous application, is kept free from pollution, and is cleansed from sin. His obedience is never absolutely perfect; but the blood atones for sins of ignorance, and washes away every stain they cause, and thus the covenant relationship is not broken for a moment so long as his faith in that blood is firm and abiding.

Such were the parties to whom this Epistle was primarily addressed. But its contents belong to us also, if, as the elect of God, we have been sprinkled with the blood, and are walking in holy obedience to the will of God. And now mark—

II. THE SALUTATION.—"Grace unto you and peace be multiplied" (cf. Jude i. 2). This is the usual salutation, and a very blessed one it is. From Babylon, where this Epistle was written, two kings wrote to their subjects greeting them in these terms:—"Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: peace be multiplied unto you" (Dan. iv. 1); and King Darius took up the same strain, and repeated the words of his illustrious predecessor (Dan. vi. 25). But far deeper and far wider in

its reach is this salutation; for it is not human, but divine, and it extends to all the nations of the earth as they hear and receive the message of redemption through Jesus Christ.

Grace signifies favour; but not that of man, for his favour is often deceitful, temporary, and extremely partial. It is the favour of God which the Apostle here desires for the elect strangers. The words are not an unmeaning salutation, but an earnest prayer; and he asks here that God may be gracious to them, by conferring on them spiritual gifts, by enriching them with faith, and love, and hope. He is the God of all grace. In the full light of His favour angels dwell, for they minister in His immediate presence, and bask in the glory that surrounds His throne. In the light of His favour, though not yet so full, the spirits of the just made perfect dwell, for they have already entered into rest, and wait for the consummation of their blessedness in holy hope. In the light of His favour the believer dwells, stranger and pilgrim though he is on earth; for he has been justified by faith, sanctified in the Spirit, and sprinkled with the all-cleansing blood, so that he can confidently approach to God in prayer, and can address Him as his Father and his God. And grace flows *to* him, *into* him, and *through* him continually. In one unbroken stream it pours itself into his nature like the river of the water of life, from the throne of God and of the Lamb, and becomes richer in its supply as it is

valued and employed. "And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John i. 16). It is, however, a gift, and can never be purchased or merited by man. It is free from the beginning, and it continues free to the end "All is free gift," says Wesley, "and yet such is the gift, that the final issue depends on our obedience to the heavenly call" (cf. chap. iv. 10).

Peace flows from grace, and is its constant companion and friend. It is the opposite of discord, war, and strife. It calms the awakened conscience, soothes the agitated breast, and gives quietness and repose to the troubled and distracted mind. "Peace; be still!" said Jesus to the waters of the Galilean lake, and immediately there was a great calm. "Peace; be still!" He says to the tempest-tossed believer, often and again, and in a moment all his fears are quelled. Nor is it peace with God only that is here desired; but peace with one another, peace among ourselves, peace with all mankind. The Christian is a man of peace, and a peace-maker to the utmost of his power; for it is the element in which he breathes, and to diffuse it is his highest joy. He may take up arms for the defence of his country and its rights, but he will do so with reluctance, and will lay them down again as speedily as he can. In the Christian Church there should be always peace. Alas that it is otherwise—that the banner of peace has been defaced and torn, and that the professed followers of Christ forget that he left them a legacy of peace! But so

it is; and we have need to pray that the discords and divisions of the Church may soon be healed.

Grace and peace were already possessed by these elect strangers, as they are by all the adopted children of God; but the Apostle prays that they may be multiplied unto them. Grace is given in conversion, for then the believer steps into the light of the Divine favour, and then his nature is renewed in righteousness. It is multiplied when he is sanctified wholly; when his spirit, and soul, and body, are preserved blameless; when he perfects holiness in the fear of God. But it goes on multiplying, for its gifts are numerous, varied, and ever growing, like clusters of grapes in the summer sun. There is no limit to its measure. It can meet every want, supply every necessity, and fill up every longing of the heart. "My grace is sufficient for thee," says our Lord to every faithful follower, and we have but to ask, and grace shall be given to us, not in scant measure, but as abundantly as we have capacity to receive it. Peace is given when the Spirit whispers to the penitent one, "Thy sins are forgiven thee;" it is multiplied when, casting all his cares on God, he is kept in perfect peace, and is thus set free from the worry and anxiety of life. Christians there are whose peace is often interrupted, often broken. But the reason is that they do not rest sufficiently on Christ; that they do not continue to lean upon His breast; that they do not leave their burdens where they laid them down, but

often take them up again for which there is really no need. There is a peace that passeth all understanding, and when our peace is multiplied, and then multiplied again, that peace is ours.

THOUGHTS OF OTHER MINDS.

Ver. 1. He who is a stranger in a country needs not on that account be sad; it is enough that he has secured a fair heritage in Christ. The more he perceives this the less will he be attached to the world, and the more will he long for his heavenly fatherland.—STARKE.

Ver. 2. *Sprinkling.*—By this word he alludeth to the sacrifices of the Law, which all pointed to the sacrifice of Christ; and to show that as it had been nothing that a sacrifice had been killed, unless the blood thereof had been sprinkled upon the people (for so was the manner), so it avails us nothing that Christ died, unless His blood be sprinkled upon us by the hand of a true faith, applying Christ Jesus to our consciences. It is not Christ that saves, but Christ's death apprehended by a true and lively faith, for a particular persuasion hereof are we to labour.—JOHN ROGERS, 1657.

Ver. 2. The Hebrew word of salutation we have here—*Peace:* and that which is the spring both of this and all good things, in the other word of salutation used by the Greeks—*Grace.* All right rejoicing, and prosperity, and happiness, flow from this source and from this alone, and are sought elsewhere in vain.—ARCHBISHOP LEIGHTON.

Ver. 2. Peace is the favour of God which now begins in us, but must work more and more, and multiply until death. If a man knows and believes in a gracious God, he *has* Him; his heart finds peace, and he fears neither the world nor the devil, for he knows that God, who controls all things, is his friend, and will deliver him from death, hell, and all calamity; therefore, his conscience is full of peace and joy.—LUTHER.

II.

THE HOPE OF THE INHERITANCE.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept in the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time"—(Chap. i., *v.* 3-5).

AFTER the salutation comes a burst of praise. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is St. Paul's method of opening his Epistles (Rom. i. 8; 1 Cor. i. 4; Ephes. i. 3), and it tends to divert the attention from the writer himself, and to fix it on Him whose servant he is. The word rendered *blessed* here[1] is generally used of God only, and He is here blessed as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephes. i. 17; Col. i. 3, etc.). Our Lord Jesus Christ was the Logos or Eternal Son of God, the one and only Being whom he ever called His Son in the very highest sense, and to whom He said: "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" (Ps. ii. 7; Heb. i. 5-9). The divinity of our Lord is undoubtedly taught in sacred Scripture, yet His Being was in some way, which we cannot comprehend, dependent on the Father, whom He calls His God even after His resurrection from the dead (John xx. 17; Rev. iii. 12).

[1] εὐλογητός.

But the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is, in another sense, *our* God and Father also, for of His abundant mercy—or His much mercy[1]—He has begotten us again[2] unto a living hope. It was indeed much mercy, abundant mercy, for we were weak, wretched, and sinful creatures; but in "the riches of His goodness" He raised us from the dust, placed us on the rock, put a new song into our lips, and inspired us with a hope of everlasting life. Of that hope we have now to speak.

I. THE HOPE ITSELF.—What is Hope? It has been defined as the desire and expectation of future good. It is not desire only, for we may desire what we never expect to gain; it is not expectation only, for we may expect what we do not desire to come. Future good we of course desire, but the hope of it implies both desire and expectation, and is thus a complex emotion of a very joyous kind. And it is almost a universal one, for where is the man that does not hope? Despair, which is its opposite, sits on the brow of the confirmed transgressor, but in the midst of their deepest sorrows, trials, and afflictions, men will hope, and hope preserves them as the anchor does the ship, which in the swelling of the ocean is thus kept from being dashed upon the rocks. The pleasures of hope have been sung by our noblest poets—Campbell, Cowper, Wordsworth, and others; and the theme is one worthy of an angel's lyre.

[1] *τὸ πολὺ αὐτοῦ ἔλεος*, cf. Ephes. ii. 4.

[2] Or begat us again, *ἀναγεννήσας*.

But what is the *Christian's* hope? It is here called a *lively*, or a *living hope*;[1] for it is "the innermost kernel of the new life." The hope of the worldling is vain, the hope of the hypocrite perishes, and the hope of all who are unregenerate will sooner or later die; but the hope of the Christian lives—lives in the storm, in the tempest, in the cloudy and dark day, and even in the hour and article of death. It is not the spectre of a hope we see, but a real hope, a hope which dwells within us, which nestles in our breasts like a gentle dove, and which does not leave us even when friendless and alone. Hope takes its stand upon the mountain top, and gazes with an eagle's eye into the glorious future, where it discerns worlds on worlds of blessedness and light, and says to us, "Your home is there." It is characterised by calmness, endurance, fortitude, and purity; and thus it is a living hope indeed, for it *has* life, *gives* life, and *looks* for life, so that those who are in possession of it need never be ashamed (Rom. v. 5).

II. THE ORIGIN OF THIS HOPE.—1. It is the fruit of regenerating grace; we are "begotten again to it." God, of His abundant mercy, has made us new creatures through the power of the Holy Ghost, and thus turned us into other men, and one of the fruits of this great change

[1] ζῶσαν. We are begotten to a life of hope—a life in which hope is the energizing principle (Alford; and see Leighton's beautiful thoughts on ver. 3).

is this living hope. We indulged a hope of worldly good, or it may be even of eternal life, before we were born again, but it rested on a false and insecure foundation. Now the hope we possess is a sure and certain hope, rising ofttimes into full assurance, because based on the immutable promises of Him who cannot lie. You remember, perhaps, the day when first by penitent faith you trusted in the atonement of the Cross for pardon; when you heard the Spirit's gentle whisper in your soul, and when you felt His seal impressed upon your whole nature, physical and moral. It was then, was it not, that hope sprang up within your breast? not the hope of pardon, for that you then received, but the hope of glory, the hope of everlasting life; and that hope, though sometimes perhaps a little dimmed by reason of temptation, sorrow, or affliction, is yours to-day, and is brighter now than in any previous period of your life. Cherish it; cast it not away; and in the end you will more than realise all that you look for and expect.

2. It is established by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The word *by*, or rather *through*, may be connected either with the "living hope," or with the "regeneration" to that hope; but it is best to connect it with the entire clause, for "the resurrection of Christ, bringing in life, and the gift of the life-giving Spirit, is that which potentiates the new birth into a living hope." A sceptical poet of our own day speaks of the body of our

Lord as still lying in some lone Syrian sepulchre; and, whilst professing to be a Christian, denies the historic fact that Jesus rose from the dead. But were that the case what hope could we have of our own resurrection or of a future life at all? The infidel confesses that he has none. Death to him is an eternal sleep. There is no immortality for individual man. This life is all, and there is nothing beyond it! On *his* platform he is right, for St. Paul declares that if Christ be not risen from the dead then is our preaching vain, and our faith is also vain (1 Cor. xv. 14). But our Lord's resurrection is the great central fact of history, nor is there any fact of history which rests on surer and more irrefragable evidence. Had it not taken place Christianity must long ago have been swept away, for it is based upon the truth of it, and has won its triumphs by the proclamation of the name of a living Saviour,—of one who was indeed dead, but is alive again, and has the keys of Hades and of death (Rev. i. 18). Hence our hope is steadfast. We trust in one who has conquered death, who has burst the barriers of the tomb, who has ascended up on high, and who ever liveth at the right hand of God. Ours is a living hope in a living Saviour, and *in* hope we are already saved. The crown of life is already on our brow, the paradise of God is already in our view, the inheritance of the skies is already certified and sure.

III. THE OBJECT of this hope is an inheritance,[1] that is,

[1] κληρονομία. Gen xii. 3; Gal iii. 6, 18, 29.

a possession which comes to us by right of heirship. If we are children of God, then are we heirs of God; but our inheritance is not an earthly one, such as the sons of the great and noble of this world look for; it is an inheritance above, an inheritance in the heavens, and the Apostle dwells on its characteristics in words which form a beautiful and expressive climax.

1. It is incorruptible.[1] Perishableness is written on every earthly possession; for rust corrupts it, decay consumes it, death destroys it, and in a few short years it passes utterly away. Look at some of the once-famous castles and domains of the British Isles—at their roofless apartments, at their broken walls, at their utter desolation! There is not a mansion, however splendid, or an inheritance, however ancient, which has not in it the seeds of corruption, and which, do what men will to preserve it, will not one day crumble into dust. But the believer's inheritance will never perish. Whether we contemplate it as a state or as a locality it will endure for ever. Is it a state? it is eternal life. Is it a locality? it is eternal in the heavens. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," said our Lord, "where moth and rust do corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matt. vi. 19, 20).

[1] ἄφθαρτον, not liable to decay—φθορα.

2. It is undefiled.[1] The word means unblemished, holy, pure. What is there on earth of which this may be said? The land of Canaan was given to the Israelites as their inheritance, and it was said to be a goodly land flowing with milk and honey. But it was polluted with blood, and full of the vilest abominations; whilst they themselves, by their wickedness, rendered it so evil that even their metropolis and their temple became defiled with sin. And look at the fairest cities, or estates, or dwellings, upon which you can fix your eye, and you will see on them stains which no chemistry can efface. And the human form and the human countenance, are they not defiled? Are they not marred? Are they not often even hideous to behold? This is a sin-stained, fallen world, and all earthly things bear the impress of the destroyer's hand. But our future inheritance is purer than the light, fairer than the cloudless sky, and brighter than the sun. St. John, describing the New Jerusalem, says, "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie, but they that are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. xxi. 27). Neither physical nor moral pollution will be found in our inheritance, but unsullied beauty and eternal bliss. Can it, then, be a material world? Yes; for the material, though glorified body of our Lord is there; and there,

[1] ἀμίαντον. As pure as crystal waters, or as the light of the sun. See on this word Liddell and Scott's Greek Lexicon.

hereafter, will be the material, though glorified bodies of the saints. Matter is not necessarily evil, as the Gnostics taught. It is capable of assuming a million forms of the noblest and the purest kind; and we may, therefore, well conceive how our future home will be, in some way, a material one, but one in which every inhabitant will be as holy as the place itself is pure. Of our employments there we know little or nothing; but, ourselves also incorruptible and undefiled, we shall be always young, vigorous, and active, and capable, therefore, as are the angels now, of high and noble enterprises, such as are at present beyond the conception of the most comprehensive mind.

3. It fadeth not away.[1] The word here used is the one from which our word "amaranthine" is derived, and refers to plants or flowers which do not fade, and whose beauty passes not away. We speak of such—of evergreens, of everlastings; but where are they? Not here on earth, for everything fades even as we ourselves do (cf. ver. 24). I have seen, on the morning of a summer's day, a garden stocked with plants and flowers on which no eye could look without the highest admiration, when, towards noon, a hot wind has suddenly swept over it, and in a few moments it has been covered with blackness, burnt up, and withered. In perfect contrast to such a scene heaven is a region where every object is beautiful for ever. *Here* life springs out of death, *there* life springs out of life; and if there are

[1] ἀμάραντον. Unfading in its beauty.

flowers there, and plants, and fruit, all are deathless, all retain their loveliness for ever.

Such, then, is the glory of our inheritance, in *substance*, incorruptible; in *purity*, undefiled; in *beauty*, unfading. Is it said that this language is figurative, and that we cannot understand it? We grant that it is figurative; yet surely these figures convey real ideas to the mind, and only by such figures can this inheritance be described at all. One general conception of our future abode which these terms enable us to form is, that it will differ from this world, our present habitation, in this respect especially, that it will be subject to no mutations, no catastrophes, no earthquakes, no storms or tempests, no winter's frost, no summer's scorching heat; but that it will be a region of perpetual light and life, the changes of which will be from glory to glory, from one degree of excellence to a higher one, from progression to progression through the cycles of eternity.

IV. THE CERTAINTY of its attainment is further indicated in this passage. It is "reserved in heaven" for believers, and they are "kept" for it.

1. We are yet in our minority. We are heirs, but not inheritors of this inheritance. How, then, do we know that we shall one day gain it? It is reserved for us in the heavens. It is kept in safe custody by the Almighty hand of God. Earthly inheritances are often seized by ruthless foes, who either take possession of them or

trample them in the dust beneath their feet; but the inheritance of the saints is beyond the reach even of wicked spirits,—the principalities and powers with which Christians have to contend on earth. They cannot approach it as they did the Paradise in which man was first placed; and, if they did, the angels which guard the gates of it would drive them back with flaming swords (Rev. xxi. 12). It is laid up for us *in the heavens* (Col. i. 5), for this is literally the meaning of the word, both in that passage and in this; and we are reminded of our Lord's words, "In my Father's house are many mansions"—(John xiv. 1). The heavens are His Father's house, and in that house are many mansions, many inheritances, many bright and glorious homes; and these Christ, our exalted Head, now holds for all the heirs of them, for He is their elder brother, and they are joint heirs with Him; and He said further, "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." O blessed certainty of this hope! Strangers and pilgrims here, "the earthly house of our tabernacle" will be "dissolved," but "we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" and somewhere in the vast bounds of space, perhaps a central sun, around which all planetary systems are supposed to revolve, we shall find an abode prepared for us, proportionate in its blessedness and glory to our personal meetness for it. It

is hidden from us now, for this the word also means. Even as parents conceal from their children, for a while, some precious treasure, and then surprise them with it, so God keeps hidden, yet secure and safe, the inheritance of light which will one day open on our view. It is kept for us, and, therefore, none can rob us of our hope.

2. We are kept for it.[1] Here a military figure is used, which has reference to a guard protecting a palace or a fortress. Christian believers are kept in the power of God as within a garrison, or a well-fortified city, so that no enemy can successfully assail them, so that no weapon formed against them can prosper. God is as a wall of fire round about His people, and the glory in the midst of them (Zech. ii. 5). Their place of defence is "the munitions of rocks," and thence by faith they already see the King in His glory, and behold the land that is very far off (Isa. xxxiii. 16, 17). Faith is the conditiou on which they enjoy this protection; for if they give up their faith they in fact leave their only stronghold, and then they are exposed to the attacks of every foe. Christ is the Christian's keeper, but in Him the Christian must abide by faith. And when does He keep him, and from what? He keeps him from the hour of temptation (Rev. iii. 10). He keeps him from falling into sin (Jude 24). He keeps him in the hollow of His hand, and as the apple of His eye. He keeps him amid the dangers and difficulties of

[1] φρουρουμένους. *Lit:* "Who are being guarded."

his earthly course. He keeps him in the mighty conflict with the powers of darkness; and He keeps him when he passes through the valley of the shadow of death. O blessed Keeper! His eyes slumber not nor sleep, but day and night are ever on His people who trust in Him, so that if their feet slip for a moment He is immediately at their side to lift them up.

Two errors exist on this matter of being kept: one which supposes that when once regenerated we are to keep ourselves, and another which imagines that from sin and sinning we cannot be kept at all. In regard to the former it should be observed that we are indeed exhorted to "keep" ourselves "in the love of God" (Jude 21), and to "keep" ourselves "unspotted from the world"—(James i. 27). But are we not all conscious that our best efforts to do this are attended with the most miserable failures, and that we are repeatedly giving way to tempers and dispositions which are inconsistent with our Christian profession? How, then, can we keep ourselves? Only by faith in Christ; only by abiding in Him as the soul's safe fortress from the attacks of our spiritual foes. *We* fail when our *faith* fails; we keep ourselves, or we are kept by Him, when our faith is strong, vigorous, and unshaken. But can we be kept at all, ask some? Must we not fall occasionally? Is there any power which can ward off the attacks of our enemies? Are there any means by which the sinful propensities of our nature may be overcome?

Yes; Christ is a Saviour to the uttermost, and, if we abide in Him, He will keep us day and night, keep us from falling, keep us from all sin, keep us in perfect peace and purity, so that we shall be always meet for the inheritance which is undefiled.

And we are "kept," says St. Peter, "unto salvation ready to be revealed[1] in the last time." Salvation here is not a negative idea, but the positive attainment of eternal blessedness, and, therefore, of the inheritance of which we have spoken above (ver. 9; James i. 12). This salvation is ready to be revealed. It is already complete, and only waits God's time to be manifested and unveiled. But when will it be? The answer is, on the last day, or at the last time when Christ will come again without sin unto salvation (Heb. ix. 28), to resuscitate the dead, to be glorified in His saints, and to receive to His right hand for ever all who are meet for the inheritance He has prepared.

[1] ἀποκαλυφθῆναι ἐν καιρῷ ἐσχάτῳ. The last time will be a time of revelation, of disclosure, of unfolding, even as the present is a time in which things are hidden and unexplained.

THOUGHTS OF OTHER MINDS.

Ver. 3. Worldly hopes often mock men, and so cause them to be ashamed; and men are most of all ashamed of those things that discover weakness of judgment in them. Now worldly hopes put the fool upon a man. When he hath judged himself sure, and laid so much weight and expectation on them, then they break and fail him. They are not living, but lying hopes and dying hopes: they die often before *us*, and we live to bury them, and see our own folly and infelicity in

trusting to them; but, at the utmost, they die when we die, and can accompany us no further. But this hope answers expectation to the full, and much beyond it, and deceives in no way but in that happy way of far exceeding it.—LEIGHTON.

Ver. 3. So secure is the title as vested in Him, and so secure the hope that rests on it—as a hope that "maketh not ashamed," that the new birth is here represented as having the same immediate reference to the future inheritance as to the present hope itself. To be begotten again to the living hope is the same thing as to be begotten again to the inheritance.—LILLIE.

Ver. 4. Usually men divide their earthly inheritances. If all the sons be heirs, some inherit one place, others others; but here the whole inheritance is enjoyed by every child; here every child is an heir to all, and hath right to all. In earthly inheritances the more you divide the less is everyone's part; but this inheritance is not diminished by the multitude of possessors, nor impaired by the number of co-heirs; it is as much to many as to a few, and as great to one as to all. Not a room, not a mansion, not a walk, not a flower, not a jewel, not a box of myrrh, but what is common to all; not a smile, not a good word, not a sweet look, not a robe, not a dish, not a delicate, not a pleasure, not a delight, but is universally communicable, and universally fit for all the thousands, millions of thousands, that are heirs of this inheritance. If there be a thousand together, everyone sees as much of the sun, hears as much of the sound, smells as much of the sweet, as he should do if there were no more than himself alone; so here.—BROOKS.

Ver. 4. There's nothing in this world but welks; the older we grow, the more we wrinkle and do wither, the more do we fade both in beauty and strength. So do inheritances; so goodly and fine houses in time are ready to drop down or are quite consumed; kingdoms also fade and decay that were sometimes flourishing; so also cities—yea, everything is the worse for the wearing. Not so this; here's an inheritance indeed could we but conceive and express the same.—ROGERS.

III.

THE TRIAL OF FAITH.

"Wherein ye exult, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the proof of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be proved with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ"—(Chap. i., *v.* 6-7).

THE Christian life is full of paradoxes. "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things," was the language of St. Paul (2 Cor. vi. 10); and similar in sentiment is the passage now to be considered: "Wherein ye greatly rejoice,[1] though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness, through (or in) manifold temptations." The believer is in possession of a living hope of the incorruptible inheritance, and that hope fills him with unspeakable joy; yet he is often the subject of deep depression of mind, and needs to be re-assured of the gracious purposes of God in the trials he is called to bear. We have to consider then—

I. THE CHRISTIAN'S TEMPTATIONS.—1. They are manifold in their nature.[2] The word "temptation" sometimes

[1] *Lit.* "Ye exult," *i.e.*, in all that is spoken of before.

[2] ἐν ποικίλοις πειρασμοῖς (cf. James i. 2). The Christian is placed not under one temptation, but many; nor of one kind only, but of divers.

means solicitation to sin, and to such the believer is often subject, for his adversary the devil is ever on the alert, presenting to his mind evil thoughts and unholy desires, to overcome which he must lift up the shield of faith. But the word also means trials, afflictions, sufferings; and to how many of these he is subject each one can bear testimony for himself. What a world of change and sorrow we live in! And none are exempt from the common lot. Even the most honoured of God's servants are liable to trials equally with other men, and many of them are "chosen in the furnace of affliction." Sometimes, perhaps, we are disposed to envy the lot of others, thinking that our trials are greater than theirs; but, if we knew all, we should cease to envy them, for every heart knows its own bitterness, and there is a crook in every lot, a bitter ingredient in everyone's cup, even as there is in ours. The elect strangers to whom St. Peter wrote had their numerous trials, for they had to bear the contempt of the world, the loss of their temporal possessions, and the sufferings incident to a pilgrim life; and were we to glance at the history of the Church through the successive centuries of the past, we should find that in all ages the true followers of Christ have had to sustain "a great fight of affliction," and that none of them reached their homes without many scars and wounds. The history of the Church is a history of trial, and it will continue to be such to the end of time.

2. They are difficult to bear; for they cause heaviness or depression of mind, as the word here means[1] (cf. Heb. x. 32). "Why art thou cast down, O my soul! and why art thou disquieted within me?" is often the language of the child of God. But ought he ever to be cast down? Ought he not to be superior to the trials of life, and to soar above them as on eagles' wings? No; Christianity is not Stoicism, and, if the believer does not feel his troubles, they would cease to be such, and would not effect their purpose and design. Whilst, then, he does not yield to a spirit of dejection, or suffer it to overcome him, he *must feel* when in the furnace of trial even as did our Lord Himself. In the presence of others, however, he should endeavour to be cheerful, and the more so if he occupies a public position in the Church, lest he should discourage those around him. When Joseph's brethren appeared before him he was the subject of deep emotion, and could scarcely restrain himself. He left them, therefore, that he might weep in secret before God, and then returned relieved of the oppressive load (Gen. xliii. 30-31). So should the Christian give vent to his sorrow in secret, rather than before men, lest they should infer that his religion is of no worth. If you are in heaviness bear it manfully, but do not show it openly. Speak of your

[1] λυπηθέντες. "Having been afflicted" is Alford's translation, but the etymology of the word points specially to mental distress. Some render it "were grieved" (cf. Lillie).

troubles to your bosom friend, but do not talk of them to men of this world. Above all, tell them to Jesus, and be not afraid to tell him all, for he will sympathise with you in every sorrow, and the least as well as the greatest trials of your life you may confidently cast at His feet.

3. They are temporary; "for a season," or "for a little time at present."[1] A day of adversity comes, when darkness intercepts the skies, when the storm sets in on every hand, when not a gleam of light shines upon the path you tread; and then, perhaps, you hastily conclude that it will be always so. But no; sorrow endureth for the night, but joy cometh in the morning. It is only for a while that the trial lasts, and ere long there is an opening in the clouds, the sun's bright beams burst through them again, and you are filled with hope and joy. There are some trials, I grant, which are life-long in their effects, and can never be forgotten, like a deep wound in the flesh which, though healed, leaves a scar which must be carried to the grave. But the longest trials, and those which leave the deepest wounds, are but for a season—the season of our earthly life, and in a brighter sphere we shall forget them all, or remember them only as the wounded soldier remembers what he has passed through when he returns victorious from the field of battle.

[1] ὀλίγον ἄρτι. "They will not be continued one minute longer than is needful for us."—*Fronmüller.*

4. They are necessary. "If need be,"[1] says the Apostle. Not willingly does God grieve or afflict the children of men, much less His own children, reconciled unto Him through Christ His Son. Does a loving father chastise his son for the sake of doing it? I remember that when a boy I once did a very foolish thing for which my father corrected me—as I thought at the time—somewhat severely; but I never did the like again, which I should have done, perhaps, had the chastisement been less severe. Do we think sometimes that God's corrections are severe? O there is "a needs be" for every stroke, and though we do not now see and understand why this trial or the other falls upon us, yet what we know not now we shall know hereafter, for we shall know this at least: that rugged as the path has seemed, it was the right one by which to conduct us to our heavenly home. I once ascended a lofty mountain by a circuitous and most difficult path, and all the way along I kept saying, "Surely this cannot be the right way; surely there must be a better and an easier one than this"; but when I reached the summit, and looked down upon that path, I saw that it was the best, if not the only one, by which I could have gained the end. So when we reach the inheritance above, we shall perhaps survey the road by which we were led, and shall see that—rugged as it was, and difficult to climb—it was the best we could have taken, and that not one difficulty connected

[1] Such is the force of εἰ δέον ἐστίν.

with it was unnecessary to the final end. The Christian life is disciplinary throughout, and the steps of it which are the most trying are just those by which we make the surest progress on the way. For—

II. THE END AND AIM of these temptations must be carefully observed. "They are for the trial of our faith."

1. The value of faith cannot be over-estimated. It is more precious[1] than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire. The term *precious* is applied to faith again 2 Pet. i. 1, and here the Apostle compares its preciousness to gold. Gold is the most precious of all the metals, not only for its scarcity, but for its beauty and its intrinsic worth. It was, therefore, used in adorning the tabernacle and the temple, and in our day it is employed in many ornamental works, and in making our most valuable coins. Gold! What pains men take to get it! What care they manifest to keep it! What joy they experience in looking at it, and in estimating the quantity of it they possess! And yet it is but a shining metal, which perishes after all. More precious far is faith in Christ, for though it possesses no intrinsic worth, yet because it takes hold of Him, and makes Him its own, gold is dross in comparison with it; and he who has it, though poor as Lazarus at the rich man's gate, is richer far than he, though he calls himself a millionaire. Gold perishes; for though it will bear the

[1] "Much more precious," πολυτιμοτερον. The Codex Sin. and other MS read it as one word.

action of fire for any length of time, yet it wears away by continual use, and will one day be burnt up with the earth itself (2 Pet. iii. 10). But faith lives,—lives in death, and far beyond it, for it is one of the things which abide, and for which there will be room even in eternity itself (1 Cor. xiii. 13). Precious faith! More precious than gold itself (cf. Heb. xi. 26).

2. But it must be tried. Gold comes out of the ground mixed with earthy matter, so that it must be put into a crucible and the dross connected with it consumed (Mal. iii. 8). It requires, however, a strong heat to melt it, the temperature necessary for the purpose being 2·840 Fahrenheit. Even so faith must be tried, and sometimes in a very severe furnace. It is proved, tested, or verified by trial, and the faith which cannot stand the ordeal is of little or no value (Job xxiii. 10).[1]

There are many ways in which faith is tried. It is tried by *divine commands.* God gives His servants some difficult task to perform, and they set about it, but, ere long, like the writer of this Epistle when he attempted to walk on the Sea of Galilee, they look around them, and seeing the waves rolling at their feet, begin to doubt, to hesitate, and to sink. Yet God never commands us to do what we cannot do; and true faith will surmount all difficulties, and will say, "By my God I can run through a hoop; by my God I can leap over a wall." Faith is often tried by *doubts*

[1] The word δοκίμιον means a test or criterion (cf. 2 Cor. xiii. 3).

—doubts insinuated by the wicked one, now of the truths of Christianity, now of some of its essential doctrines, and now of the goodness of God in His dealings with us in our daily life. Such trials of His faith our Lord passed through in the wilderness (Matt. iv. 3, 6, 9), the little word *if* being intended by the devil to awaken a question in His mind as to His being the Son of God. How often is that "if" addressed to us! How often is our faith thus put to the severest test! But it can overcome it; for it is a shield against which even the fiery darts of the enemy are hurled in vain. And faith is tried *by fire*—the fire of discipline, of persecution, of protracted bodily affliction, such as the martyrs of the early Church, such as many of the elect strangers, passed through, but passed through triumphantly, and gained the prize. Genuine faith will stand all these tests, for though there are some who cast away the beginning of their confidence, and some who even make shipwreck of their faith, yet in the great majority of instances faith endures, as seeing Him who is invisible, and gains the victory in the severest conflict.

3. The ultimate design of the trial is that it may "be found," nothing of it being lost, "unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ."[1] The Apostle here carries us forward to the great day of our Lord's apocalypse, when He shall appear in His majesty in the heavens, and when he shall gather around Him all His

[1] ἐν ἀποκαλύψεί Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (cf. v. 5; 1 Cor. i. 7; 2 Thess. i. 7, etc.).

faithful ones. Then, the faith which has been proved and has stood the test, will receive the reward of grace, for the works of which it has been productive will meet with the approbation of the Judge, and He will say to each of His people, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Their faith will appear unto praise for their fidelity; unto honour for their service, unto glory, for the glory they have had brought to him. Praise, honour, and glory are things of which the men of this world are highly ambitious, and some of them, though comparatively few, gain for awhile the praise of their fellow-men, the honour of the age in which they live, and the glory of an illustrious name as conquerors on the field of battle, or as discoverers in the field of human science. I do not say that such praise, and honour, and glory, are valueless, or that to desire them is in itself sinful and wrong; yet how unsatisfactory they are in themselves! How unenduring, and how brief! They are not to be compared for a moment, even in their highest forms, with the praise which Christ will give to His faithful followers, with the honour with which they will be invested, with the glory which will surround their persons for ever. "I reckon," said St. Paul, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us;" and he did not reckon without knowing what sufferings are, nor what the glory will be hereafter (Rom. viii. 8; 2 Cor. xi. 23-28, xii. 1-4.)

THOUGHTS OF OTHER MINDS.

Ver. 6. If you find this present time sorrowful and anxious, have patience. In the world you shall have tribulation; look joyfully to the last time that shall put an end to all grief, and bring you eternal glory. God knows best what medicine He has to use for and what burdens to lay on each, in order to kill the old Adam.—HEDINGER.

Ver. 6. Consider that all thy afflictions are needful, and work for thy good. Nothing is intolerable that is necessary. The waters are not more needful to waft the ship, than afflictions are to carry the vessels of our souls to their port of bliss. Affliction, saith the martyr to his friend, will scour and rub you bright, that you may be fit to be set on the high shelf of heaven. "If need be," whilst we have diseased bodies, physic is as needful as food; whilst we have diseased souls, misery is as needful as outward mercies. The winter is as necessary to bring on harvest as the spring; affliction is as necessary to bring on the harvest of glory as any condition.—SWINNOCK.

Ver. 6. Trial by fire improves gold; it frees it from all debasing alloy, but it does not render it indestructible. Refine gold as you will, it is, after all, a perishing thing. But the trial of the faith of the Christian has a nobler result. Purified and strengthened by the trials it is exposed to under the influence of the Holy Spirit, faith, with all the graces which grow out of it, survives the wreck of all material things, and "at the revelation of Jesus Christ is found to praise, and honour, and glory." The results of all the trials to which they have been exposed in the present state will be found in that character of perfect conformity to the image of God in which consists at once their perfect holiness and their perfect happiness.—DR. JOHN BROWN.

Ver. 6, 7. In spiritual trials, which are the sharpest and most fiery of all; when the furnace is within a man; when God doth not only shut up His loving-kindness from His feeling, but seems to shut it up in hot displeasure; when he writes bitter things against Him; yet then to depend upon Him and wait for His salvation, and the more He smites the more to cleave to Him—this is not only a true, but a strong and very refined faith indeed. Well might he say, *When I am tried I shall come forth as gold.* Who could say, *Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him;* though I saw, as it were, His hand lifted up to destroy me, yet from that same hand would I expect salvation.—LEIGHTON.

Ver. 7. In this world the saints of God have rested especially on His wisdom and love, and they have waited till the dark cloud should disperse, and both shine forth in their eternal splendour. Something of their brightness often breaks through the cloud on earth, and even should it be as with a watery beam, yet sheds holy cheerfulness on our path. But at the appearing of Christ there shall be the full manifestation of the wisdom and love on which faith rested. The saints of the living God shall then appear in a state of entire perfection and meetness for the heavenly inheritance; and this meetness shall be seen to be the result of that discipline of the word, and ordinances, and providences of God, rendered effectual by the Holy Spirit, to the completion of that mighty change by which a fallen and corrupt creature is made meet to enter into the presence of God, and dwell with Him in everlasting fellowship.—RICHARD WATSON.

Ver. 7. Sometimes we think we have more faith than we have, as Peter, who, notwithstanding his bold and confident protestations to our Saviour Christ, shamefully upon the trial denied Him. Contrarily, others think they have little faith, that upon the trial appears more, and shines more gloriously, as Job's and David's. Who also could have believed that there had been so much in many poor martyrs, if they had not come to the field and encountered with tyrants and their torments; as who would imagine such sweetness in spices until bruised.—ROGERS.

Ver. 7. *At the appearing of Jesus Christ*, namely, to judgment. True it is (as we have heard) our souls enter into glory at death, but our perfect happiness is not until the end of all; besides, that which we have at death is not seen but to ourselves, whereas then it shall be manifest to all. We must be content to wait for our full redemption till then; on that solemn day we shall be honoured by the Lord Himself.—ROGERS.

IV.

FAITH'S GRAND END.

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see (Him) not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and (already) glorified: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Concerning which salvation prophets enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings in Christ, and the glories after these (sufferings). Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you, by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent from heaven; which things angels desire to look into" (Chap. i., *v.* 8-12).

To THE doubting Thomas, who would only believe in the resurrection of Christ when he saw Him, but was at length convinced, Jesus said, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed"—(John xx. 29). St. Peter heard those words, and there is, doubtless, a reminiscence of them here. He takes up a fresh line of thought, but with it the Person he has just mentioned—Jesus Christ. "Whom," he says, "having not seen ye love; in whom,[1] though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of

[1] *εἰς ὃν*—undoubtedly connected with *ἀγαλλιᾶσθε*—*ye rejoice.*

your souls;" and then he proceeds to speak of the greatness of that salvation as being the object of inquiry by the ancient prophets, and by the holy angels of God. Faith, and its end, will now occupy our attention.

I. FAITH.—1. It is trust without sight. "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing," etc. The elect strangers had not seen Jesus in the flesh, and yet they believed in Him, trusted in Him, placed in Him their fullest confidence for salvation; and this is the case with every Christian now. Men there are who say that they will not believe in Jesus as the risen One unless they can see, and they demand occular proof of His resurrection from the dead; nay, even that would not satisfy them, for, like Thomas, they want the proof of touch also, or they want demonstrative proof as clear and undeniable as that of mathematics. They cannot have it, they never will have it, in this life; and even if they had it they would not believe (Luke xvi. 31); and, if they believed, their belief would not save them. It is faith in an unseen Saviour which brings salvation, and blessed, therefore, are they that do not see and yet believe. For this reason, and that faith may be exercised the more vigorously, Christ has left His Church in person, and is now the invisible One to us, though seated at the right hand of God. For sight injures faith, as one has said;[1]

[1] See Hare's "Mission of the Comforter," Sermon 1, where this thought is beautifully unfolded. John xvi. 7.

and only in the unseen can faith properly repose. Seeing is not believing, as some affirm; it is *seeing*, and though, in a certain sense, we may trust in one whom we see, yet if we do not see him our trust may be far more trustful, and far more worthy of him in whom we trust. You had once a friend, in whom, while he was with you in person, you could confidently rely; but he has left you for a distant land, from which, however, he is sending you letters assuring you of his unwavering regard. Do you believe in him? Then you honour him more than if he were still with you, and you could speak with him face to face. Jesus is an absent friend; but He assures you, in a thousand ways, that He loves you ever, and He asks you to trust Him though you do not see Him, and in doing so you honour Him far more than you could, had you His visible presence with you day by day.

2. This faith produces love. Trusting in the unseen Saviour, you love Him, love Him *now*, as the Apostle means; for the relation which Christians sustain to their Lord is not a speculative or an intellectual relation merely, it is one of the heart, one of the affections, He having become the object of their truest, deepest love. For any one to say "I believe in Jesus, but I do not love Him," is to say what is untrue—to say what cannot be. It is impossible to believe in Him, that is, to trust Him, as a Saviour, and not to love Him; for the moment we trust Him we know that He loves us, and then we begin to love

Him in return. And this love to Him is what Dr. Chalmers called the expulsive power of a new affection. It takes possession of the breast, and drives from it the love of the world, the love of sin, the love of self, whilst it sanctifies and ennobles all true love, and leads men to love even their bitterest enemies and foes. It is the most practical principle in the world. It constrains men to the highest obedience, urges them on to the grandest duties, leads them to make the greatest sacrifices, and enables them to brave the severest sufferings. It is a fire in the bones, which many waters cannot quench, and in possession of it the believer longs for more and yet more of its consuming power, singing—

"Burn, burn, O Love! within my heart,
Burn fiercely night and day,
Till all the dross of earthly loves
Is burned, and burned away."

O Jesus, Jesus, dearest Lord!
What art thou not to me?
Each hour brings joy before unknown;
Each day new liberty.

3. This faith enkindles joy. "Believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Some would make this joy entirely future, as if it meant, ye will rejoice when your salvation is complete. But the Apostle, doubtless, speaks of a present joy, the joy which now arises in the expectation of one day seeing Him who is invisible, and sharing in the glory of which He is the eternal source. It

is both the joy of possession, for Jesus is already ours; and it is the joy of hope, that we shall one day be for ever His. It is, therefore, an ineffable joy,[1] a joy which cannot be told out, cannot be explained to others, cannot be conceived of, except by those who really possess it. How great is the contrast between such joy and the idle, vain, and evanescent joy of the world. The Christian's joy is deep, abiding, superior to the changes and conflicts to which he is ever subject; the worldling's joy is mere hilarity, which appears on the surface, but has no substance, and which is subject to constant fluctuations with the ever-varying events of life. It is true that the animal spirits of the Christian are liable to change, especially on account of the state of his health, over which he has little or no control; yet his joy often abounds even when his physical frame is depressed, for it is a joy in God, in Christ, and in the consciousness of his heirship to eternal life. It is, therefore, "full of glory;" for, as one has said, "it contains glory in the germ," or, as another says, "it is joy clothed in glory," so that we may call it glorified joy,[2] for already it causes the countenance of its possessor to beam with light,[3] and ultimately he will be arrayed in glory, the glory of eternal blessedness reflected from the presence of his Lord (cf. Rom. viii. 26).

[1] ανεκλαλήτος—"that which cannot be spoken out." The deepest waters run stillest. This word is found nowhere else in the N. Test.

[2] δεδοξασμένη. [3] Exod. xxxiv. 29. Acts. vi. 15.

II. THE END of this faith is, says the Apostle, "the salvation of your[1] souls." The word here used is metaphorical, and refers to the object on which competitors in the games kept their eye fixed with the hope of reaching it, and carrying off the prize. The Christian runs "not as uncertainly" (1 Cor. ix. 26), he keeps in view "the crown of righteousness" (2 Tim. iv. 8), and he "looks" continually "to Jesus, the author and finisher of his faith" (Heb. xii. 2). Hence, he already receives the salvation of his soul, for he regards the future as the present, and anticipates by faith the blessedness which awaits him in the great day.

Of this salvation the Apostle speaks at length, as being sought out by ancient prophets, and still inquired into by holy angels.[2]

1. Concerning this salvation prophets inquired and searched diligently. They prophesied or foretold that it should come. It was the burden of the predictions which they were inspired to utter. They wrote under the superintendence of the Holy Spirit, who made known to them the fact that a great Deliverer should appear, that a Redeemer and Saviour would one day come, who, superior to Moses and to Joshua, would rescue His people from

[1] The word ὑμῶν is cancelled by several editors, so that they read "the salvation of souls," or "soul salvation." Cf. *Lillie.*

[2] The article is wanting in both cases. The words are, therefore, generic. *Alford.*

spiritual bondage, and confer upon them the highest dignity and honour. The spirit of Christ, that is, the spirit which He has, and gives, was in them, and testified to them the sufferings of Christ[1] and the glory that should follow; and what he testified to them they wrote. Deny it who will, the Old Testament Scriptures are full of Christ, whence He Himself, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets," expounded to two of His disciples what they had written concerning Him (Luke xxiv. 27, 44-46). Did they not speak of His sufferings in such passages as Ps. xxii. 1, 14, 15, and Isaiah liii. 1-6? And did they not speak of the glory[2] that should follow, in such as Ps. ii., lxxii., and Isaiah ix., xi., liii. 10-12? A suffering and a glorified Messiah is a theme which pervades their writings, and which they set forth in various aspects and under various forms.

But these prophets did not fully understand the meaning of their own predictions. They, therefore, "inquired"[3] with the utmost diligence and zeal, as the word implies; and "searched,"[4] as miners engaged in seeking for gold or silver

[1] Literally the words are "in Christ—regarding Christ," including, as some suppose, the mystical sufferings of His Church, as in Col. i. 24.

[2] *Lit:* The glories—δοξας—the glory of His resurrection, the glory of His ascension, the glory of His session at the right hand of God, and the glory of His second coming.

[3] ἐξεζήτησαν. *Lit:* "Sought out."

[4] ἐξηρεύνησαν. This word is found nowhere else in the N. Test. Cf. Prov. ii. 4; Zeph. i. 12.

in the bowels of the earth, "what, or what sort of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify."[1] They inquired *what* the predictions they uttered meant, and *when* they would be fulfilled, or what would be the characteristics of the times when the fulfilment should take place.

When, for example, David wrote his twenty-second Psalm, or Isaiah his fifty-third chapter, he was under the plenary influence of the Spirit of Christ, and wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. But he wondered at his own production, and, as it lay before him, said to himself: "What means all this?" and he sought, doubtless, in prayer and in holy meditation, to ascertain the import of these his predictions. And what reply did the prophets receive? It was revealed to them that the events would explain the prophecies, and that not unto themselves, but to future generations, they were ministering these things. It would seem that St. Peter specially refers to the Apostles who preached the Gospel to these elect strangers; and we know how he himself was able, on the day of Pentecost especially, to explain some of the ancient prophecies (Acts ii. 17-31). Prophets then predicted that Apostles might preach and explain: they predicted under the influence of the Spirit of Christ, and the Apostles preached "with the Holy Ghost"—that same

[1] "Was shewing beforehand"—ἐδήλου προμαρτυρόμενον. The latter word is only found here.

Spirit—"sent (down)[1] from heaven." But would this answer satisfy the prophets? would it not rather deter them from further search? Doubtless they would have been glad to know more, as Daniel, for example, when the angel unfolded to him some of the wonders of which he had spoken, and Daniel said, "I heard, but I understood not;" then he said to the angel, "O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?" But he was compelled to be content, for the reply was "Go thy way: for the words are closed, and sealed up until the time of the end" (Daniel xii. 8, 9). The prophets, then, lived under a dispensation of types and shadows, but looked forward to a dispensation of substance and reality. On us that dispensation has dawned, for we live under the bright economy of the Gospel, and what many prophets and righteous men longed to see, but saw not, has been unveiled before our eyes. We now look on a Saviour who has suffered, but also on a Saviour who is glorified; and with holy exultation we anticipate His second coming to receive His saints to Himself. How exalted are our privileges! Prophets and apostles alike minister to us, and ours, therefore, is the brightest era that ever yet dawned upon the world.

2. But holy angels also desired to look into these things.[2]

[1] The word *down* should no doubt be cancelled. It is used nowhere else out of 130 instances with ἀποστέλλω. Cf. *Lillie*, etc.

[2] Or "long to gaze,"—ἐπιθυμοῦσιν παρακύψαι, or to pry into these mysteries. We have no good English word equivalent for the expression.—*Lillie.*

This salvation was not designed for them, but for us (Heb. ii. 16); and yet they are intensely interested in our welfare, and, whilst worshipping spirits before the throne of God, they are sent on errands of mercy to the saints on earth (Heb. i. 14). They watch over us, they guard us, they minister unto us, and probably, in our sleeping hours especially, have access to our minds—sometimes, as I firmly believe, originating remarkable and glorious dreams not to be accounted for in any other way. The word here used implies that they continue looking into these things. They have been the subject of their studies for ages past, and yet they cannot sound the mystery of God's love in the redemption of mankind. Hence they stoop and peer down into it,[1] like the cherubim of glory which were over the mercy-seat, under which was the ark containing the tables of the law. That law had been broken; how were its violators to be reconciled to God? The blood sprinkling that mercy-seat was the reply to the question, and the angels are ever lost in adoring wonder at the great and glorious plan. And what do they see? They see "the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephes. iii. 10). Yes: the principalities and powers in the heavenly places witness here grander displays of God's wisdom than they do in the survey of the created universe. To them all worlds are doubtless accessible, and they pass, it may be, from planet

[1] Some, however, deny that there is any allusion to the cherubim here, though many expositors admit it. (Cf. *Wordsworth*, etc.)

to planet, from sun to sun, from system to system; but nowhere do they find such manifestations of God's wisdom as in the sufferings of Christ and the glory which now follows.

But it is our salvation—that salvation which is the end of our faith—that the angels contemplate. From the beginning they have viewed with wonder and delight the entrance among them of redeemed human spirits, and as those spirits, from Abel onwards, through successive generations, have entered Paradise, they have welcomed them with holy joy, conducted them to Abraham's bosom, or placed them at the Saviour's feet. O could we witness the scenes which are constantly taking place in the world of spirits, as one after another, moment by moment, is brought home from earth by its guardian angel, to dwell in that higher sphere of light, what rapturous emotions would thrill our hearts, and how little we should think of the sorrows of this transitory world. This—the reception of the redeemed into the spirit-world—is part of the glory that follows the Redeemer's sufferings here; and this the angels look into, whilst they also anticipate the final end, when the mystery of God shall be finished, and the marriage of the Lamb shall come.

In a word, the whole scheme of redemption, from the first promise given to man in Paradise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head (Gen. iii. 15), to the hour when it shall be said, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men," is the subject of angelic study; and,

doubtless, it will continue to be such in the ages of ages through the distant future, when we shall be their fellow-students, and through eternity shall be learning more and yet more of "the manifold wisdom of God."

THOUGHTS OF OTHER MINDS.

Ver. 8. The eye may be shut; the ear may be stopped; the understanding may turn itself away from unpleasing subjects: but the eye, when it is open, hath no power not to see; the ear, when open, hath no power not to hear; and the understanding hath no power not to know truth when the attention is turned to it. . . . Now this was the case of Thomas—and, indeed, of all the Apostles—not with respect to the whole of their faith, but with respect to the particular fact of the Lord's resurrection; the proof they had of it was full and absolute. Jesus in His well-known person stands alive before them; and to believe, when they saw Him alive, that He who had been dead was then living, could be nothing more meritorious than to believe that He was dead when they saw His body laid in the grave.—BISHOP HORSLEY.

Ver. 8. Faith is a grace that hath both its birth and life in light, and in that light it sees light. Faith is not only a hand but an eye to the soul, and hath its sights both in way of *aspect* and *prospect*, not only to look on things immediately before it, but to look on things far hence, and to come; it can see things that are invisible. Some things are *invisible* in respect of their nature; so God is, and so spirits are. Some things are invisible in respect of their *distance*, that are not yet present with us, but are things to come; faith can see both these. It is true we have not the sight of *sense*, but we have a sight as noble, yea, and in some respects more excellent, than that of sense. The sight of faith is more *full* and *certain* than that of *sense*. We have indeed not a *perfect* sight, but we have such a sight which God hath vouchsafed to His poor ones in the world, that by the power of it they may be enabled to walk through all the conditions, how dark and sad soever.—SYMONDS. 1651.

Ver. 8. The object of the Gospel is both to pacify the sinner's conscience and to purify his heart; and it is of importance to observe, that what mars the one of these objects mars the other also. The best way

of casting out an impure affection is to admit a pure one; and, by the love of that which is good, to expel the love of what is evil.—DR. CHALMERS.

Ver. 10, 11. The prophets formed a large and organised community, thoroughly conversant with one another's writings, trained up in the study of them, and, as St. Peter says, slowly tracking out—ἐρευνῶντες—both the time and the nature of that salvation of which the Spirit of Christ that was in them did signify beforehand. I doubt not that many a later prophecy was the result of a patient and prayerful study of what had been already revealed, and hence the constant reference and allusion made by each succeeding prophet to the writings of those who had preceded him.—DR. PAYNE SMITH.

Ver. 11. The Scripture is above the Church, and that whereon it is grounded, and hath no greater testimony than from itself. We testify that God is the true God from all idols, and Christ from all false Christs; do they, therefore, depend on our testimony, and are we above them? Though the Church discerneth the Word, or Scriptures, from false writings, and, therefore, rejecteth a great many of epistles and gospels—of Bartholemew, Thomas, Thaddeus—as adulterous, yet this proves not that they depend on the Church's testimony. A king's letters come to a city, the officers whereof, by the style, sign, or some other thing whereunto they are accustomed, accept of them, yield to them, and testify that they are not false or counterfeit; are they, therefore, above the king or his letters?—ROGERS.

Ver. 12. Angels have only the contrast between good and evil, without the power of conversion from sin to righteousness. Being then witnesses of such conversion to God, they long to penetrate the knowledge of the means by which it is brought about. They themselves are placed outside the scheme of salvation, therefore it is said that they desire to look into the facts of the apostolic teaching.—HOFMAN.

Ver. 12. As the angels meditate on the sufferings and the glories of Christ, and behold the mingled darkness and brightness of that path of life along which He leads His people, and mark the prosperity of the wicked, and the workings of apostacy, and the desolations of Zion, and the gross darkness still covering the earth, they say with us, but with humility profounder far than ours, "We know in part," and they await the day of final revelation.—LILLIE.

V.

PRACTICAL LESSONS.

"*Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, being sober: hope perfectly for the grace that is being brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as children of obedience, not conforming yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all behaviour; because it is written, Be ye holy for I am holy. And if ye call Him Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: Knowing that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, (as) silver and gold, from your vain behaviour received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, (the blood) of Christ. Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in the last times for you, who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God*"—(*Chap.* i., *ver.* 13-21).

St. Peter seldom goes far with any doctrinal statements ere he pauses to enforce them with practical lessons. His was a *practical* mind, and he well knew that Christianity was no mere theory which held out to men bright prospects of the future, independent of their life and conduct. To be sustained by the hope of a glorious inheritance there must be an humble walk with God, and the most perfect obedience to His will. "Wherefore gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope to the end," is his language here, *wherefore* being connected with all that goes before, but especially, perhaps, with the fact that his

readers were the subjects of the living hope; for again the Apostle speaks of their hope, which is here the central and leading idea.

I. THE LESSONS he unfolds are of the highest value, and suggest to us thoughts for our deepest contemplation.

1. The maintenance of hope comes first. With the loins of your mind girded, and with soberness of spirit, fix all your hopes on the grace which is to be brought to you in the revelation of Jesus Christ. The revelation here referred to is the apocalypse of our Lord in the last day (ver. 7). Then, says the Apostle, will the grace which has already been received, and which is gradually coming down on you in richer measures, be crowned with eternal glory; for then you will see your glorified Head, and then you will be transformed into His glorious image (Rom. ii. 7; Phil iii. 21). Hope, then, to the end; or hope perfectly,[1] banishing all anxiety and doubt, lifting up your heads as conquerors about to receive their crown, singing the song of victory, knowing that the victory is sure. But essential to this is the girding up the loins of the mind, and the exercise of true sobriety. When men enter on a journey, wrestle with an adversary, or go out to war, they find it necessary to gird themselves around the loins, to lay aside all hindrances, and thus to prepare themselves

[1] τελείως ἐλπίσατε—"hope without doubt or dejection, with full devotion of soul." There is to be nothing fitful in our hope, but we are to continue hoping until the object of our hope is gained.

for the important task. Thus the Israelites were to leave Egypt, "with their loins girded" (Ex. xii. 11), and the prophet Nahum says to one threatened with war, "Make thy loins strong" (ii. 1). But it is not the loins of the body, but those of the mind, that need to be girded, even as our Lord said to His disciples, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning" (Luke xii. 35), and as St. Paul said to the Ephesians, "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth" (ch. vi. 14), to both which passages St. Peter probably had reference here. The loins of the mind are its strength, or vigour, and how needful that they should be girded up for the holy strife, every one engaged in it must know. Is the Christian who allows his mind to become enervated with sinful pleasures, or enfeebled with temporal pursuits, prepared for the great conflict with the powers of darkness, or likely to maintain his hope of immortality? No; a strong and vigorous mind is essential in every part of the Christian warfare, and was never more needed than in the times in which we live. But sobriety, too, is essential. "Being sober,"[1] says the Apostle, by which expression he means spiritual sobriety, which is the opposite of extravagance, eccentricity, and over-excitement; and displays itself in a calm but confident expectation of future good. Is not this

[1] νήφοντες. The present participle indicates the constant state of mind in which hope is to be practised. (Cf. *Alford* and *Calvin* whom he quotes.)

exhortation needed in the present day? Is there not much wildness and fanaticism in the Christian Church? Are not men led away, for example, by fanciful notions of a temporal Messianic kingdom, which they picture to themselves as the grandest object to which they can look forward? Let us learn to think soberly, as well as to act soberly, and to indulge in no hopes for which we have not a warrant in the Word of God (1 Thess. v. 5-8; 2 Thess. ii. 1, 2).

2, The pursuit and practice of Christian holiness (v. 14-16). The elect strangers professed to be obedient children, or literally, children of obedience,[1] having derived their very existence, as believers, from a heavenly parentage. St. Paul speaks of the children of disobedience (Ephes. ii. 2, v. 6), who are consequently children of wrath (Eph. ii. 3; 2 Pet. ii. 14). But the elect strangers were children of light (Eph. v. 8), born of light and into light, and, therefore, children of God, who readily and joyfully sought to obey His will. How blessed a privilege to be such children! But, being such, they could no longer walk after their former sinful lusts. They could not fashion or form themselves after the pattern of their ante-Christian state.[2] In this state, which was one of

[1] *τέκνα ὑπακοῆς.* This mode of expression must be referred to the more vivid way of regarding things among the Orientals, which treats intimate connection, derivation, and dependence, even in spiritual matters, as the relation of a child or son.—*Winer.*

[2] *μὴ συνσχηματιζόμενοι.* Cf. Rom. xii. 2—the only other passage in the N. Test. where this verb occurs.

comparative ignorance of the law of God, they gave themselves up to unholy passions, to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the lust of power (1 John ii. 16); now they must crucify the sinful affections of the soul, must put off the old man with his deeds, and must reckon themselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. vi. 11, 12). For they were now called to holiness by the Holy One. God, whom they professed to serve, is holy—the Holy One of Israel, righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works; and, therefore, must be served by holy hands. "Ye shall be holy," said God to His people Israel, "for I am holy," and the declaration is repeated here, with still greater emphasis and power (Lev. xi. 44). *Because* God is holy, His people must be holy; but in what measure or degree? None can be holy in the most absolute sense of the term; nor do those who teach what has been called the higher Christian life—Christian perfection, or entire sanctification, suppose that the believer can ever become equally holy with his Maker. Even angels are not; even the spirits of the just made perfect are not. The creature's must necessarily be a relative holiness, measured by his capacity for it, which is always finite. And yet it must be a real holiness. Under the law, persons and things were deemed ceremonially holy; but it is not to such a holiness that we are called. We are to be holy in heart, holy in life, holy as the Apostle here expresses it, "in all manner of conver-

sation." That word is much stronger in the original; it is *behaviour*,[1] including the whole conduct of the man towards God and his fellow-man. Our words must be holy, our lips that utter them holy, our hands holy, our feet holy, our entire deportment holy; and, in order to this, our affections must be holy, our motives holy, our thoughts holy, our tempers holy. In a word, holiness must pervade our whole being, which must be re-created after the pattern of the Holy One; and without *such* holiness we can never see God.

3. The cultivation of reverential fear. "If ye call on the Father;" but the *if* is not expressive of doubt, for Christians do call on the Father, or rather, as the meaning is, they call God their Father, saying, "Our Father which art in heaven," for they recognise Him as the universal Father—as the Father of angels and of men, but specially as *their* Father, reconciled to them through Jesus Christ. But whilst He is their Father, He is also their Judge—the Judge of the whole earth, who accepts no man's person, but judges righteously according to everyone's work. Men take cognisance of outward relations, and judge between rich and poor, high and low, citizens and strangers; for, as a recent preacher says, they are worshippers of genius and of talent, of titles and of dignities. But will God regard your persons? says the prophet Malachi (ch. i. 9).

[1] ἐν πάσῃ ἀναστροφῇ—in all behaviour. The word means a turning about—hence conduct, deportment, life.

No; He judges men not by their high-sounding names, their lofty stations, or their distinguished gifts, but by their work—the one work of each man's life, which can only please Him when it is the result of a living faith in Christ. True, He has committed all judgment to the Son (John v. 22), but there is no contradiction here, for He is still the fountain of judgment, whilst the Son is the delegated dispenser of it. And it is not the final judgment only that is referred to here. God is now our Judge. He judges every man to-day, and always, putting each one into the balances of truth, and saying of this man, "He is wanting," and of another, "He is a faithful servant." But does He never err? Never. It is impossible that He should. He knows infallibly what every man really is, and in every case He pronounces a just and righteous judgment.

Pass, then, says the Apostle, "the time of your sojourning here in fear." We are wayfaring men, travellers on the road to the bar of God, where the final judgment will be pronounced upon each of us; dwellers in a house of which He is the owner, to whom we are bound to pay something for our occupation of it—even praise, and prayer, and holy obedience to His will. Cultivate, then, a holy fear of God, not a slavish dread which, like timidity or terror, would deter you from approaching Him, but the child-like fear which reverences His name and delights to do His will. The Christian is not to indulge that slavish

fear of God which makes Him a tyrant, represents Him as unjust, and abandons all hope (Isai. xli. 14; 1 John ii. 17, 18); yet "Blessed is the man that feareth always;" and there are seasons when even reverential fear approaches to awe and dread, as when Peter himself said, "Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" This, however, will be but occasional, when some extraordinary manifestation of the Divine majesty and glory passes before our minds. The usual attitude of the soul will be, and may be, a filial fear of offending God, and a jealous fear of its own liability to err. In this fear we are to pass our time. It is but a brief period—a mere parenthesis in our existence, but upon every moment of it millions of years depend; and in a very short season we shall be called into the presence of our judge, and shall receive our reward according to our personal deserts.

II. THE GROUNDS on which these lessons are enforced (ver. 18-51). These are twofold.

1. Our redemption by Christ. "Knowing that," etc. Here is a new argument to holiness of heart and life. By a price of immeasurable worth we have been redeemed. We were captives taken in war with arms in our hands against the government of the Lord Jehovah, and were under condemnation of eternal death. But we were more—we were slaves to the vain conversation, or behaviour—the habits, ideas, and practices which we had inherited from our fathers, for we were "born in sin and shapen in iniquity,"

and, as we grew up, were but too ready to imitate the example of our parents. Look at the successive generations of mankind! Have they not been treading in one another's steps, and doing things which they ought not to do, simply because their fathers did them? In heathen lands you will sometimes hear men say of their idolatrous practices, "Our fathers taught them to us, and why should we abandon them? Our religion may not be the best religion, but it was good enough for our fathers, and why should it not be good enough for us?" And oh! how difficult it is to rescue men from old habits, to save them from their inveterate sins! But it has been done, and there are thousands of the human race who have been delivered from the prejudices which had been strengthened by centuries of superstition and crime, and whose vain conversation has changed into a deportment worthy of the highest praise.

But by what means were we redeemed? Can silver and gold redeem men from the punishment they deserve if they have broken the laws of their country? and would thieves, and murderers, and traitors, be set at liberty, provided that a certain amount of money were paid into its exchequer? And is God's government of less importance? No; the price of blood, in the estimation of His law, was blood; but not the blood of calves or of goats, nor yet the blood of the transgressors of the law themselves. Only precious blood—only a sinless, spotless life, offered up in

sacrifice, could meet its stern demands. The blood of Christ was that precious blood; for He was *the Sinless One*, and He voluntarily gave Himself a ransom-price for all, to be testified in due time.

But again—could silver and gold redeem men from their sinful practices, induce them to give up their idols, and so change the entire bent of their nature that their whole deportment should become pure and holy? When was a man ever bribed into goodness? When was a man of an ungodly life ever led, by the promise of wealth, to love God, and to enter on a pathway of holy obedience to His will? But this has been done by the precious blood of Christ. The Holy Spirit has applied the merit of Christ's death to men's consciences and hearts, and presently a new life has been implanted in their nature, they have cast off the old man with his deeds, have thrown off the shackles of prejudice and pride, and have taken their place at the feet of Jesus, to learn the lessons of His grace and love. Thus our redemption in both its aspects is effected by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Such, typically, was the paschal lamb by whose blood Israel was redeemed from the house of bondage (Exod. xii. 5; Lev. xxii. 20); but such actually was Christ—blameless and spotless—the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world (John i. 29, 36; Rev. vii. 14). Have you been thus redeemed? then what a motive is before you to the pursuit of that holiness to which the Apostle here refers.

2. God's fore-ordination of the plan.
redemption is enhanced by the fact
Divine mind before the foundation of
not an after-thought which met an
fell, for man's fall was foreseen fro
far back in the ages that are past,
of God, was *fore-ordained indeed*
appointed to be the Redeemer of
the foundations of the world we
first took place, we know not
proved that millions of years
however, the Son was with th
delight (Prov. viii. 29), and
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deliver men from death,
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And thus fore-ordained,
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f their country, and St. Peter
for the righteousness of the
reign to his habitual conception
for our righteousness by suffering
mediate cause of His death; our
ultimate effects.—DALE. 1876.

the truth through the
nother with a pure heart
seed, but of incorruptible,
for ever. For all flesh is as
of grass. Withered is the
ay: But the word of the Lord
which by the Gospel was preached

ntinue," says the author of the
(ch. xiii. 1), who, if not St. Paul
approval of what he wrote; and, in
Romans, which was undoubtedly St.
i, "Be kindly affectioned one to another,
love; in honour preferring one another"—
And what says the Apostle John? "He that
his brother abideth in death" (1st Epistle iii. 14),
He that loveth his brother abideth in the light"—
ii. 10). Thus the three Apostles of our Lord take up
is own exhortation, which he called a new commandment
John xiii. 34), for here St. Peter speaks in similar language, and "to *love one another*" is thus the lesson taught by them all.

The exhortation of St. Peter now to be considered
corr ds with the former one—to maintain their hope in

the pursuit of Christian holiness, and it is urged on the ground of the perpetuity of God's word, in contrast with the frailty of human life.

I. THE EXHORTATION.—1. It is implied that the elect strangers had purified their souls in obedience of the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren. Literally the words are "having purified,"[1] that is, "seeing that ye have purified," etc. Every Christian has professedly done this. He has purified the very centre of his being, as the word *soul* here means; for he has put off the old man with his deeds, has laid aside the envy, hatred, and malice of his depraved nature, and has learned, as a new habit, obedience to the truth of God. That truth is the truth of the Gospel, which enjoins, and leads to, unfeigned love of the brethren; the very purpose and design of the Gospel being to bring men back to the love of God, and then to the love of their fellow-men. The love here referred to, however, is specially the love of Christians one toward another; for if anywhere love should abound, it should be in the Christian Church—the spiritual family of God on earth. Sometimes it is feigned, carnal, and impure; for there are persons not a few who profess to love God's children when they really do not, but are seeking only their own gratification or their own ends. Only when we have purified ourselves is our love un-

[1] τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν ἡγνικότες. The part. carries with it an inferential force as to the exhortation. *Alford.*

feigned. Only in the heart of the true believer does this noble principle exist. But how does this purification take place? "By the Spirit," is the answer given here; for none but the Holy Ghost can purify the souls of men, and this He does through their faith (Acts xv. 8, 9; Rom. viii. 13), when He reveals to them the merits of the great Atonement, and sprinkles upon their consciences the blood of Christ. You cannot purify your souls by any external applications, by any washings or lustrations in waters however sacred. The stains of sin are too deep for that; but the Spirit, by the application of the blood of Christ, can so purify them, and keep them so pure, that every principle opposed to love shall be destroyed, and to love your Christian brethren with a genuine love will become, ere long, the fixed habit of your mind (cf. 2 Pet. i. 5, 7).

2. But brotherly love must be cultivated. Having then purified your hearts, carry out the purpose, and "love one another with a pure heart fervently," or literally, "out of the heart earnestly."[1] Brotherly love is like a tender plant which needs to be watched over, guarded, cultivated, with all assiduity and care. There are many things around us which have a tendency to chill it, to check its operations—nay, even to destroy it utterly. How soon misunderstandings arise among Christians! How easily may they misinterpet one another's words and actions! And

[1] ἐκ καρδίας—ἐκτενῶς. The word means "with the energies on the stretch—stretched out—strained," etc.

how quickly may their love to one another be blighted by some sinister influence that comes between them! Not spontaneously will brotherly love arise; and not without effort will it continue. Hence the word here rendered *fervently.* It means with strenuous effort and sustained perseverance. Is it an easy thing for Christians to love one another? Then why the animosities, and strifes, and divisions of the Christian Church of to-day? Why our sectarian barriers? Why our endless disputations? Why our incessant controversies? And why, especially, the *spirit* in which religious questions are discussed by professedly religious men? Absolute unity of opinion on all matters is not to be expected in the present life; but brotherly love might be maintained notwithstanding. It seems, however, to be largely wanting, and never was this exhortation more needful than it is to-day, "Little children, love one another."

3. Only, however, among *true Christians,* who are born again, is brotherly love possible. But *they* profess to be such, as the Apostle says, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." As the natural relationship produces natural affections, so the spiritual relationship produces spiritual affections; and, because it emanates from an eternal source, it ought to last and never die away.

Not of, or rather *out of,*[1] corruptible seed is the Christian

[1] εκ σπορας φθαρτῆς, ἀλλὰ ἀφθάρτου.

born; but *out of* incorruptible begetting by *means of* the word of God. The mystery of the new birth is here unfolded. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," said our Lord to Nicodemus, and it can never be anything else; so that if a man could enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, or a hundred times, he would be no better; and hence the folly of the ruler's question (John iii. 4-6). The Hindoos believe that souls not pure enough to be absorbed into Brahma, are sent into the bodies of different animals until they become pure; but all such transmigrations would not change their nature in the least, neither can any of the means to which men have recourse in our own land—education, culture, science, or what else. Man's sinful nature can be changed only by the power of the Spirit of God. He who brooded over the chaos of the world, and said, "Let there be light, and there was light," can alone brood over the chaos of human nature, and so renovate and renew it that it shall become a thing of beauty and of joy for ever. And he does this. The Father "of His own will begat us with the word of truth," says St. James (ch. i. 18), but the immediate agent of our second birth was the Holy Ghost, for "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit;" and "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John iii. 5). It is a profound mystery this, which the philosophers of this world tell us they cannot understand. How should they? Spiritual things are

discerned only by spiritual men, and spiritual men are not those who give themselves up to the study of mental science merely, and seek to explain the mysteries of the kingdom of God by metaphysical analysis. Spiritual men are those who have themselves been born of the Spirit, and by them only is this great doctrine of regeneration understood, having become to them a matter of experience in which they daily rejoice.

The instrumental means by which the Spirit effects this change is the loving and enduring word of God. Our Lord indeed said, that by eating of His flesh only could man have spiritual life (John vi. 51); but it is just the doctrine that Christ, by His death and resurrection, is the life of the world, that forms the substance of this living word; and when Christian ministers, who are the seedsmen of that word, preach it—preach Jesus as the world's Atonement, and faith in Him as the means of its reception—the Spirit applies that word to the conscience and the heart, and thus it becomes the instrument of the wondrous process. Is it asked, why does it not prove effectual in all? The answer is, because the hearts of many are like the rock which the seed cannot penetrate, and which, therefore, lies on the surface to be swept away by the winds, or picked up by the fowls of heaven—the ever-vigilant servants of the wicked one.

Now, just because Christians are a new-born people, they may exercise brotherly love. It is one of the fruits of

the grace they have received, and now they are to cultivate it, to watch over it, to let it grow and develop itself in all its beauty and luxuriance; and thus will they practically echo Christ's prayer—"That they all may be one," by promoting that oneness which only love inspires.

II. THE PROOF of the durability of the Word of God, in contrast with the frailty of human nature. St. Peter here refers to the language of the prophet Isaiah: "The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (ch. xl. 6-8). The citation is free, not literal; but it is very striking in connection with what he has already said.

1. Think of the frailty of human nature. All flesh is *as* grass, or, as Isaiah says, *is grass*. It has been observed that this is not metaphorically, but literally true, modern science having proved that carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen, with a proportion of mineral substances, make up the total composition of the human frame. But it is true in another sense. Flesh, here, signifies human nature in its unrenewed state; and *it* is grass—transitory and frail, whatever beauty it puts on. Or the word flesh may mean whatever is human, such as strength, agility, learning, riches, and honour; for all that appertains to man, as man,

is transient and passes away. Many of the grasses of the field produce beautiful flowers, such as the lily (Matt. vi. 28-30); and who does not love the flowers? The cultivation of them has become an art, nay, a science; and what a sight do our gardens frequently display of varied coloured flora, the natives of different climes! We may well ask why they were given us?

> "Our outward life requires them not,
> Then wherefore had they birth?
> To minister delight to man,
> To beautify the earth."

And as God Almighty delights in His works—such works as the fragrant rose, and even the modest daisy, so He intends that we should delight in them, and it is well to cultivate a love for them in our children from their earliest days. But ah! how frail they are. To-day yon little plot of ground blooms with these beautiful creations, whilst from them a most delicious perfume fills the air around; to-morrow they are gone, have fallen to the earth, and lie there in scattered leaves scarcely the shadow of what they were.

Human nature decks itself with flowers. Infants and children are themselves like flowers, so beautiful and attractive that we look on them with even greater pleasure than on the fairest flowers that ever bloom. In youth and manhood many persons adorn themselves with flowers, or with rich apparel, with precious stones, with splendid

names and titles. But what then? All "the goodliness of man," with all his "glory," is as the flower of grass; it withers, dies, passes away, and is soon forgotten. How touchingly this is expressed in the well-known lines of Samuel Wesley:—

"The morning flowers display their sweets,
And gay their silken leaves unfold,
As careless of the noontide heats,
As fearless of the evening cold.

Nipt by the winds' unkindly blast,
Parch'd by the sun's directer ray,
The momentary glories waste,
The short-lived beauties die away.

So blooms the human face divine,
When youth its pride of beauty shews;
Fairer than spring the colours shine,
And sweeter than the virgin rose.

Or worn by slowly-rolling years,
Or broke by sickness in a day,
The fading glory disappears,
The short-lived beauties die away."

The Apostle's inference from the transitoriness of human nature is, that whatever springs from it is unenduring, and that only those possess an abiding life who have been re-born through the abiding word.

2. Hence the contrast. "But the word[1] of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which, by the Gospel, is preached unto you." The Gospel is the word

[1] The *uttered word* of the Lord. ῥῆμα, not λόγος.

of the Lord Jesus, spoken by Himself and by His ministers, and treating of Himself, as the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Is it also transient, unstable, and of temporary duration? No; it is incorruptible, unperishable, eternal, as also is the seed derived from it, and planted in the hearts of those who believe. In the teachings of men it is often mixed with error; but, though this endangers its success, it does not change its nature, for it disowns and casts off whatever is opposite to it, and out of all the controversies of the past eighteen centuries it has come forth as pure, as beautiful, and as glorious as ever. What efforts have been made by Scepticism, Infidelity, Romanism, and other false systems, to destroy and render inoperative the Word of God! Had it not been the incorruptible word it would have perished long ago. It has been subject to the scorching heat of criticism, and to the chilling frosts of neglect and indifference; yet it lives to-day, and its power is felt over the wide world of men as it never was in any preceding age. The more it is crushed, the greater vitality it presents. *Its* beauty never fades; *its* fragrance never fails; *its* glory never wanes. In our own day modern science has been employed by its foes to discredit its teachings and to falsify its facts; but do our sceptics really imagine that they will succeed in disproving its truth or in inducing its advocates to cease proclaiming it? If they do so imagine, they are beating the air, and spending their critical strength for

naught. As the tried word of God lived through the opposition of the first four centuries, and through that of the two last centuries in this country and in France, so it will live through the opposition of the rationalism and the indifference of this nineteenth century, and will shine the brighter for all the trials it sustains.

But if the word of the Lord is incorruptible, then also is it seed, and then they in whose hearts it is sown, and who have received it by a living faith, are born again to an immortal life. They may counteract its vitality by their own wilful backslidings of heart and life; but nothing else can rob them of the treasure they possess, nor crush the spiritual life of which they have become the heirs. "Hold fast," therefore, "the form of sound words."

THOUGHTS OF OTHER MINDS.

Ver. 22. Love to the saints, for the image of God stamped upon them, is a flower that does not grow in nature's gardens. No man can love grace in another man's heart, but he that hath grace in his own. Men do not more naturally love their parents, and love their children, and love themselves, than they do naturally hate the image of God upon His people and ways. . . . Pure love is for what of the Divine nature, for what of Christ and grace, shines in a man. It is one thing to love a godly man, and another thing to love him for godliness.—THOMAS BROOKES.

Ver. 22. The true reason why there is so little truth of this Christian mutual love amongst those who are called Christians is, because there is so little of this purifying obedience to the truths whence it flows: faith unfeigned would beget this love unfeigned; man may exhort to them both, but they require the hand of God to work them in the heart.—LEIGHTON.

Ver. 24 This our life is often compared to grass, and that fitly: for as grass is subject to come to an end many ways, so we. It may be blasted by the east wind as soon as ever it peers out of the ground; if not that, yet in the spring the beasts will crop and bite it off; if it miss both these, yet the mower will cut it down with his scythe; if it escape all these, yet there is one thing coming that it cannot escape, namely, the cold, frosty winter, whereby it must needs wither away. So we may be blasted as soon as we are born. How many have died the same hour they have been born, or shortly after? If we escape then, yet some disease may bite us in our youth; or if we miss both these, death with his scythe may cut us down in our middle age; but if yet we escape, the winter, notwithstanding, of old age will wither us away, and we cannot shift it.—ROGERS.

Ver. 24. Flowers seem intended for the solace of ordinary humanity: children love them; quiet, tender, contented ordinary people love them as they grow; luxurious and disorderly people rejoice in them gathered. They are the cottager's treasure; and in the crowded town, mark, as with a little fragment of rainbow, the windows of the workers in whose heart rests the covenant of peace. Passionate or religious minds contemplate them with fond, feverish intensity. The affection is seen severely calm in the works of many old religious painters, and mixed with more open and true country sentiment in those of our own pre-Raphaelites.—J. RUSKIN.

Ver. 24, 25. What is the great defect in all human greatness and beauty—in earth-born riches and pleasures? Transitoriness.—MOMBERT.

VII.

THE MILK OF THE WORD.

"Wherefore having laid aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, all evil speakings, as new-born babes earnestly desire the spiritual guileless milk (of the word), that ye may, by it, grow unto salvation; if indeed ye have tasted that the Lord is good"—(*Chap.* ii. 1-3).

THE connection between this chapter and the preceding one is so close and intimate that they ought scarcely to have been separated. It is marked by the word *wherefore*, which refers to the fact that believers are a new-born people—are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible," and as such are called to cultivate the new life with all assiduity and care. The seed will prove incorruptible if hindrances are removed to its growth, and if means are adopted to its invigoration; otherwise it will be smothered and will perish, even as seed, however excellent, will perish if sown among thorns.

There are things to be laid aside; there is one thing to be desired and sought after. These are the two thoughts which present themselves for our consideration here.

I. THE THINGS TO BE LAID ASIDE. The Apostle mentions five, but he includes others of like nature, and he means that they are to be laid aside once for all, never to be touched, thought after, or desired again. Literally the words are "having laid aside,"[1] for virtually the work has

[1] ἀποθέμενοι—the aorist, which has this force. *Alford.*

been already done, since none can be Christians at all in whose hearts such evils exist. But having been laid aside, the temptation to them must be resisted, and not one of these noxious weeds must be permitted to show its head.

1. All malice—or all manner of malice. The word is *evil*,[1] and has been taken by some as the genus of which the following are the species; but, as Alford observes, the next words—*all guile*—are parallel with this, not subordinate to it. As often, elsewhere, we are to understand by the term malignity, or resentment of real or fancied injuries. You think that some one has done you a wrong, and you are angry with him; you owe him a grudge; you are determined to have your revenge. This is malice—and it is one of the worst of evils; it rests in the bosom of fools (Eccles. vii. 9); it cannot rest in the bosom of a Christian. And yet there are *Christian professors* who cherish it, and who—forgetting that vengeance belongs only to the Lord and not to them—brood over their wrongs like Esau, and threaten, like him, to be avenged upon their brother (Gen. xxvii. 41). Do you ever feel the slightest movement in your breast towards such a disposition? Check it immediately, lest it break out into a flame which cannot easily be quenched.

2. All guile. Guile is deceit, and is opposed to truth

[1] [illegible] signifies in general [illegible] is quality, not [illegible], and in a moral sense, malignity, or a desire to injure others. The threefold [illegible] in this passage seems to refer [illegible] to the mind, 2 to the conduct, [illegible] to the speech.

and openness of mind. A man who cherishes guile is never to be trusted, and he is so suspicious that he can seldom trust anyone himself. "Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom there is no guile," said Jesus, of Nathaniel, implying that a man of guile could not be a true Israelite, and how much less a true Christian. A true Christian is sincere, *sine cera*—like virgin honey without wax; so that you can see through him, and can perceive that he is what he professes to be. Does *he* cozen? Does *he* cheat? Does *he* wear false colours? Does *he* deal with a double hand? No; he scorns the very thought, and rather than do a mean or underhand trick will suffer any loss, knowing that character is more precious than thousands of silver and of gold. A guileless man will never be afraid of the closest inspection into his life and conduct. He is open in all his dealings with his fellow-men, and even before God he can say, when maligned or persecuted, "Thou knowest the way that I take;" "Thou hast proved mine heart; Thou hast visited me in the night; Thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing" (Ps. xvii. 3).

3. Hypocrisies are allied to guile,[1] and are indeed a species of it; hence the *all* is not repeated here. For what is hypocrisy? It is acting a part as on a stage, where a person appears to be what he really is not. There,

[1] δόλον is the abiding disposition, ὑποκρίσεις are the acts of personation and deception which are some of its manifestations. On the latter word see Liddell and Scott's Lexicon.

however, the spectators know that the character is assumed for the while, and hence are not deceived, so that, strictly speaking, the actor on the stage is not a hypocrite. A hypocrite is one who *deceives* and who *intends* to do so—who does so knowingly, and who is therefore full of guile. Our Lord exposed in the most withering manner the hypocrisies of the Scribes and Pharisees; and He condemns hypocrisy in every form, and owns as His followers those only who are genuine characters, and in whom everything is true and real. Is it a sin to pass a false coin as a real one? It is a still greater one to pass as a Christian when such you are not, and one day the mask will be torn from your face, and you will stand with shame before an assembled universe.

4. Envies. The guileless disposition knows no envies. But some men see others better off, more respected, and in possession of greater honours than themselves, and they envy them, want to be like them, and are mortified if they cannot be. Thus Simon Magus wanted the gift of the Holy Ghost, that he might do the miracles which he saw others do (Acts viii. 17, 18). Nay, Satan himself wanted to be as God, or was envious of the dignity and glory of God's beloved Son; and this was the cause of his fatal and irrecoverable fall. Oh, envy not. Let not one spark of this sin dwell within your breasts. Envy neither the property, nor the talents, nor the fame, nor even the piety of others; but rejoice rather in their welfare, and be thankful for your own. We have no need to envy others. God

gives to all with a liberal hand, and to desire or to covet another man's gifts is virtually to be dissatisfied with heaven's bounties to ourselves. Christian ministers are often in danger of being envious. They see some of their brethren far more popular than themselves, and perhaps they are vexed on this account, and it may be that they become imitators of them, hoping to win somewhat of their renown. They fail, and then they are tempted to detract from the excellencies of these their brethren, and to speak of them as undeserving of all this honour. Beloved brethren in Christ, be envious of no one's talents, but be thankful for and make the best use of your own, for such is the only path which will conduct you to enduring fame.

5. All evil speakings or slanderings.[1] Envies lead to these; and these are the bane of all society. What heart-burnings, and jealousies, and misunderstandings have arisen from the practice of evil speaking! And, in these days, I regret to say it, men are spoken evil of in some circles of society, whatever position they hold in the Church or in the State. There are many ways of speaking evil of others. You may insinuate doubts as to their piety; you may ask significant questions about them which will lead others to ask questions still more significant. And it is an easy thing to blast the character of another, whilst it is a very difficult

[1] *καταλαλιὰς.* Rendered by some, "detractions," but the meaning is wider. Huss says of this evil, "that it takes place in various ways, either by denying or darkening a neighbour's virtues, or by attributing to him evil designs in doing good." Quoted by Fronmüller.

thing to repair the injury. "Speak not evil one of another, brethren," says St. James (ch. iv. 2); and elsewhere (ch. iii. 5) he speaks of the tongue as an evil member, which nothing can restrain but the grace of God. Be it ours to seek that grace and to hold our tongue as with a bridle, that it may never injure or offend another.

"These things" the Christian has already laid aside, and in all circles of true believers they are guarded against with the utmost care. But just as weeds may be cut up in a garden, yet start again if the roots are left, so may there be a "root of bitterness," or bitter root of some kind, springing up to trouble us; and only when the very last remains of sin are scattered, and every *thought* is brought into captivity into the obedience of Christ, are we free from the danger of yielding to, and being overcome by, the evil dispositions of our hearts.

II. THE THING TO BE DESIRED. 1. It is called the sincere milk of the word.[1] Milk is nature's food, and for children, especially, there is nothing to be compared with it; nor, indeed, can adults find anything more pleasant and nutritious. St. Peter here employs the word as a metaphor of the truth which he and others proclaimed, for truth, and especially the truth as it is in Jesus, is the spiritual food of the soul. It is not spoken of here in contrast with strong meat, as often by St. Paul, but in respect to its nourishing qualities only, "the sincere milk of the word."

[1] The expression, "of the word," is understood.

Such is the rendering of our version, but the two words used mean respectively the "spiritual" and "the guileless," or "unadulterated" milk.[1] Not natural, but spiritual milk is needed, and that milk must be genuine and pure (2 Cor. ii. 17, and James i. 21). But some there are who mix with the Word of God the poison of error, who add to it the mere traditions of man. How many dogmas has Romanism added to the great doctrines of the Gospel, from that of transubstantiation to that of the personal infallibility of the Pope! and there are other Churches to-day who are attempting to foist upon their people some of the most noxious errors which it is possible to instil into the mind, such as sacramental grace and priestly absolution. And, alas! the people want such things. With the genuine milk of the word they are not content, but long for something either more palatable to their taste or more fostering to their vanity and pride. Is it surprising that they do not grow? Is it to be wondered at that they are weak and sickly? If you would be vigorous in your Christian life you must feed on the unadulterated milk of the word. From the Word of God itself, unmixed with the teachings of men of corrupt minds, you must draw your spiritual nourishment; and if you listen to human exposi-

[1] The first word is λογικὸν, which Alford renders *spiritual* for want of a better and more distinctive word; and the second is ἄδολον, *guileless*, or that which has no by-ends. Others think the latter word means *pure*, or *unadulterated*, as it is used of liquids in this sense.

tors of the Word of God, you must test their teachings by the word itself. "Prove all things," says the Apostle Paul, "hold fast that which is good."

Nor is it difficult for spiritually-minded persons to discern the evil from the good, or to try the things that differ. Give an infant adulterated milk, and it will turn from it with loathing; give the truth of God mixed with human error to a new-born Christian, and he will dash it from his lips with profound contempt. The believer in Christ, being taught of the Spirit, soon learns the difference between the pure and the mixed; and having tasted of the *good* Word of God, he wants nothing else, for he knows that there is nothing better.

2. The manner in which it is to be desired is thus significantly expressed: "As new-born babes desire ye the sincere milk of the word." There is nothing more guileless than a new-born babe, and there is nothing more intense than its longings for the breast. Its desire for it, as Rogers says, is earnest, constant, and impartial. "The infant heir," says Swinnock, "preferreth his milk before his largest manors. A famine of the word pincheth and paineth him more than a famine of bread and water."

Now the new-born child of God has "tasted that the Lord is gracious," for the language of the third verse does not imply doubt, but rather certainty. And oh! how sweet the taste was—sweeter than honey or the honeycomb; whence David said, "O taste and see that the

Jehovah is good" (Ps. xxxiv. 8), and Jeremiah said, "Thy words were found and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart (Jer. xv. 16). But having tasted of this milk, the new-born child will long for it still, for tasting what is good excites the appetite for more. He will not, by-and-by, loathe it as the Israelites did the manna; but, retaining his child-like simplicity through the whole of his Christian life, his desire for it will ever recur, for "Christ crucified," as Augustine said, "is milk for babes and food for the advanced." "I have stuck unto thy testimonies," said the Psalmist; and another psalmist, even David, said, "Moreover, by them is Thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward" (Ps. xix. 11).

Cultivate, then, beloved, this longing for the sincere milk of the word. Better food you can never find. The word rendered *gracious* in verse 4 means rather *good*, and, as applied to meats and drinks, sweet and pleasant; and this, says Luther, is tasting indeed "to believe from the heart that Christ has given Himself to me, and has become my own, that my misery is His, and His life mine." Have you tasted this? and will you ever wish to go back to the flesh-pots of Egypt, and not be satisfied with such a Saviour as you have found? The first sign of decay in the spiritual life is when the Christian becomes less diligent in the reading of God's Holy Word, and less desirous of the things that work for His peace. If you find your

appetite for the milk beginning to fail, you have need to be alarmed, for, if that fails, you will soon become too feeble to prosecute your Christian course.

3. On the contrary, long for this milk "that you may grow on it unto salvation."[1] This will be the result of continually feeding on the sincere milk of the word,—you will be strengthened, invigorated, and confirmed; and will grow up into Christ, your living Head, in all things. Growth is of the highest importance to a child, but is of still greater importance to a Christian. If he does not grow in wisdom, grace, and holiness, his character will be stunted; he will lack energy, and life, and power; and instead of becoming a man in Christ Jesus, capable of doing exploits, of meeting difficulties, and of standing his ground against the wiles of the enemy, he will continue a mere babe, unfit to go alone, and in constant danger of a serious fall.

The growth of a child in stature ceases at a certain time, but that of his mind may continue to the end of life. And the child of God may be ever growing;—his intellect may expand, his thoughts become wider, his grasp of the truth be firmer and more fixed, with each succeeding year of his life. There is no limit, no assignable limit, to the measure of grace and of wisdom which he may attain even in this life, and, doubtless, in the life to come he will possess much larger and much greater powers. But the

[1] εἰς σωτηρίαν, *i.e.*, Unto the present and final salvation of the soul.

means of growth are the same from the commencement of his Christian life to its close; this "sincere milk of the word." If he begins to feel dissatisfied with it, and to feed rather upon sweetmeats and sugar-plums, he will soon find his growth retarded; and this, in fact, is the reason why many Christians cease to grow. They seek after novelties; they want flesh rather than manna; adulterated rather than pure milk. Now, whilst we should retain our child-like character in its simplicity, tractableness, and docility; we are counselled to be men in understanding; and Christian manliness will only be attained by constant feeding on the living word. It is all milk in the estimation of St. Peter, though according to St. Paul some portions of it are strong meat. There is no contradiction between the two Apostles, for they are looking at the Christian in different aspects; but the whole compass of revelation is before us, and by the constant study of the word we shall grow unto salvation—unto the fulness of the stature of men in Christ Jesus.

Let me speak, in conclusion, specially to young persons who have recently united themselves to the Church of Christ. That you should grow in wisdom and in holiness is of the highest importance both to yourselves and to others. You have, it may be, a long life before you; but if it should be a feeble, sickly life, it will be of little service to society, and it will expose you to all kinds of temptation, under which you will probably fall. Like a reed

shaken with the wind, you will bend before the storm, and ultimately break; or, like a feeble sprout, you will be in constant danger of being trodden under foot of men. If you remain, in every respect, babes in Christ always, you will always be timid, fearful, and apprehensive of danger; if you grow into the stature of young men and fathers, you will be strong to labour in your Master's service, and to enter the battlefield into which you may be called. I have heard that the ranks of the Russian army are being filled by youths of eighteen or twenty years of age, but doubtless they are strong youths, not children, for to send a child into a field of battle would be absurd. Are you ambitious to be employed in some of the high places of the field, where you may win some trophies for your Lord and gain for yourselves honour and renown? Grow in grace, grow unto salvation; but grow by means of the sincere milk of the word. Education is valuable; a knowledge of philosophy, science, and history is valuable; a highly-cultivated mind is valuable; but none of these will do in place of a knowledge, experimental and practical, of the Word of God. Desire that above all things, and, as food of any kind, whether milk or strong meat, is only nutritive when received into the system, so must you read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest this sacred word, which will then become the means of strengthening and invigorating your inmost being and of preparing you for the life that never ends.

THOUGHTS OF OTHER MINDS.

Ver. 1. We may say of every new-born babe in God's household that it is born a living child, complete in all the faculties that shall adorn the glorified saint, and the proof that it lives is that it grows.—LILLIE.

Ver. 1. Christianity is not satisfied with partial and superficial improvements; it demands inflexible severity toward the old man, and insists upon that impurity in every shape and form shall be exposed and struggled with. The progress of the Christian life corresponds every way to its beginning. He that in a first repentance has been awakened from spiritual sleep must every day rise anew from sleep; he that hath put on Christ in faith must daily put Him on more thoroughly. This is necessary because the old man exists alongside the new, although the dominion of the former be broken.—FRONMULLER.

Ver. 1. *All guile.* This is added to show (lest any should think none but guile in great matters or measure forbidden here) that there is a thorough reformation required: therefore it will not serve any man's turn to say, My shop is not so dark as others; I mingle not my commodities so much as such and such; I never deceived in any great matters. All guile must be abandoned of a Christian who cares for his soul. A Christian must show forth the truth of his Christianity in his particular calling, in his shop, buying, selling, etc.; that men may take his word and believe it as if they had seen it with their own eyes, yea, count his words as good as a bond, that they dare rest on his faithfulness that he will not deceive.—ROGERS.

Ver. 2. The new-born creature desires the word for a good end, that he may grow thereby in grace and holiness; another man may desire it that he may grow in ability to discourse, or the like; but this man that he may grow in faith, love, and sanctifying graces. Besides, hunger being his sauce makes the word sweet to him: "He esteemeth the word of God's mouth more than his appointed food" (Job. xxiii. 12). Mark—not than varieties, or superfluous fare, but than daily and necessary food. The former might be spared, but this—for the preservation of daily life—is necessarily required; but God's Word was before this. Spiritual dainties are most delightful to them that have special grace.—SWINNOCK.

Ver. 3. This is the sweetness of the word, that it hath in it the Lord's graciousness, and gives us the knowledge of His love. This they find

in it, who have spiritual life and senses, and those senses exercised to discern good and evil: and this engages a Christian to further desire of the Divine Word. They are fantastical deluding tastes that draw men from the written word and make them expect other revelations. This graciousness is first conveyed to us by the word; there first we taste it, and there still we are to seek it; there the love of God in Christ streams forth in the several promises. The heart that cleaves to the Word of God, and delights in it, cannot but find in it daily new tastes of His goodness. There it reads His love, and by that stirs up its own to Him, and so grows and loves every day more than the former, and thus is tending from tastes to fulness. It is but little we can receive here, some drops of joy that enter into us; but there we shall enter into joy, as vessels put into a sea of happiness.—LEIGHTON.

VIII.

THE CHRISTIAN TEMPLE.

"Coming to whom, a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and honoured; be ye also, as living stones, built up a spiritual house, for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Because it is contained in the Scripture, Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, honoured; and he that believeth on Him shall in no wise be ashamed. Unto you, therefore, is the honour, which believe; but to the disobedient the stone which the builders rejected, the same hath become the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to them which stumble, being disobedient to the Word, whereunto also they were appointed"—(*Chap.* ii., *v.* 4-8).

St. Paul, in his epistle to the Corinthians, speaks of the Christian Church under the symbol of a temple, but he uses the word—ναὸς—nowhere else, and St. Peter never uses it at all. There can be no doubt, however, that when he wrote these words the idea was in his mind, and that he thought of the temple of Jerusalem, in contrast with which he calls believers a spiritual house—οἶκος, of which the Lord Jesus is the foundation, or the corner stone. We are, therefore, warranted in speaking of the Christian temple here, and in doing so we shall dwell on its foundation and its superstructure.

I. THE FOUNDATION OF THIS TEMPLE. 1. It is Christ Himself, for to Him the Apostle refers when he says, "to whom coming as unto a living stone." The Church rests upon Jesus, and "other foundation can no man lay."

He is the way, the truth, and the life; He is the wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification of His people; and, therefore, He is the stone or rock on which the temple rests.

To the writer of this epistle He once said, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church;" whence the Church of Rome affirms the supremacy of this Apostle, and maintains that he was the first bishop or pope of Rome, and that all his successors are the infallible teachers of mankind. But why, then, does Peter not affirm this of himself? Why does he not lay claim to superiority over his brethren, and tell us that he is the rock on which Christ built His Church? He never entertains the thought, and Rome's assertion is utterly unfounded and manifestly untrue.

Peter was indeed a stone laid upon the foundation-stone, as also was each of the Apostles (Ephesians iii. 20). They were the first layer of the temple, next to the foundation; but the foundation itself is Christ and none other, and unless we build on Him we can have no place whatever in the glorious edifice. He is called "the living stone," for, as the Eternal Son of God He had life in Himself, and, as the Son of Man, He died, but rose again from the dead, and declared Himself the living one. He *has* life, and He *gives* life, spiritual and eternal, to all who trust in Him; for no sooner do materials, however dead, touch Him, or come into union with Him, than, in a moment, they are

instinct with life and animation. A stone is hard, cold and rigid, but this stone *lives* and imparts life to every other stone of which the Church is built.

A proof of this is drawn from the Old Testament Scriptures,—"because it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth in Him shall not be confounded (ver. 6)." The quotation is from Isaiah xxviii. 16, but in an abbreviated form (See also Romans ix. 33), and the latter clause in the prophet is "He that believeth shall not make haste." The foundation-stone of a building is usually placed at the chief corner, where it unites the two walls, and Christ is the chief corner-stone by whom the Old Testament economy and the New are united, and by whom the Jew and the Gentile are made one. Build upon this foundation and you will neither haste to find another, nor be confounded in your hopes of it, for it is a tried stone, a sure foundation, and will stand whatever test it may be subject to either by friends or foes.

2. Its excellence is set forth by a contrast—"rejected indeed of men, but chosen of God and honoured." At the time of our Lord's appearing the entire polity of the Jewish people was in danger of being swept away. Their national life was almost gone; their religious life was ready to expire; their city was in the hands of the Roman empire; and their temple was in danger of being razed to its foundations. Nor were they unconscious of all this, and hence

their rnlers were attempting to place the nation on a new foundation, and to restore its polity to its former grandeur. But where was the foundation-stone? On whom could they rely, and in what could they trust? The Messiah? Yes; and they thought that He would even now appear. He *did* appear, but not in the splendour of an earthly prince, not with the pomp of a worldly monarch. He had no form nor comeliness, and when they saw Him there was no beauty that they should desire Him (Isaiah liii. 2-4). On this stone, therefore, they would not build. They despised and rejected Him, and said, "Not this man but Barabbas." "This is the stone set at naught by you builders,"[1] said St. Peter, before the Sanhedrim (Acts iv. 11), and they trembled as they heard the words, for now they knew that it was too late to repair the mischief they had done, and the blood of the just one they had shed was already upon them and upon their children.

Their conduct is imitated now, and Christ is still disallowed both by Gentiles and by Jews, and to-day there are thousands, even in Christian lands, who see no beauty or excellence in the Lord Jesus that they should build their hopes of the future upon Him. The sceptic rejects Him; the rationalist rejects Him; the worldling rejects Him; and "we will not submit to His authority, nor trust in His name," is the language of the great majority of mankind.

Mark the contrast: Disallowed, indeed, of men, but

[1] Quoted from Ps. cviii. 22, to which passage St. Peter refers here also.

chosen of God, and honourable.[2] He was God's elect one ere He came into the world, for to no angel or seraph could the work of human redemption be entrusted, but only to the eternal Son. And when, in the fulness of time, He became incarnate, the Father twice declared of Him, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 17, xvi. 5). Is He less pleased with Him now? The world is not pleased with Him, for it is repeating its attempts to rob Him of His glory, and to trample His honour in the dust; but He is God's elect one still, and sits at the Father's right hand until His enemies are made His footstool. And by believers He is held in honour, "A tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation." His name to them is as ointment poured forth, and they are never weary of telling others of His love. They have tried this stone and they have found it firm, and the longer they rest upon it the more confident they become.

3. The results of its being laid. "Unto you, therefore, which believe in the honour"[3] of belonging to the stone, and of being united to the building of which it is the foundation. Such is the import of verse 7. And what an honour! Were stones conscious and able to speak, would they not deem it an honour to be built into some splendid

[1] *Lit:* Elect. ἐκλεκτὸν. [2] ἔντιμον.

[3] ἡ τιμὴ. "The honour implied in the οὐ μὴ καταισχυνθῇ, said of those who believe in Him." *Alford.*

palace, and a yet greater one to be built into a grand cathedral? The living stones *are* conscious, and by them it is deemed the highest of all honours that they are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets into the temple of the living God.

But what is He to unbelievers? "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offence" (Isaiah viii. 14).[1] The risen Christ stands like a stone left in the path over which the disobedient stumble to their serious fall; and, instead of honour, they meet only with disgrace and ruin. Being disobedient to the word,[2] they stumble on the dark mountains, where their feet are caught as in a trap, and where, whilst they look for light, they find themselves in the shadow of death and in the midst of a gross darkness (Jer. xiii. 16). True, they were *also* appointed to this by Him who placed the stone before them, yet by no absolute and unconditional decree; but because their unbelief and disobedience were foreseen, and because God punishes sin with sin, and wraps in deeper darkness those who refuse to come to the light (Hos. viii. 11).

They have their followers to-day. The Jews still stumble over this stone; and to how many of the intellectual and refined among the Gentiles is Christ a rock of offence! O

[1] Also quoted by St. Paul, Rom. ix. 33.

[2] Such is the connection. τῷ λόγῳ belongs to ἀπειθοῦντες. Comp. Matt. xvi. 23, where Christ said to Peter, "Thou art an *offence* unto me"—the very word σκανδάλον used here.

beware of rejecting this living stone! The certain result will be your fall into the darkness of eternal condemnation, and the guilt will lay at your own door only.

II. But let us now look at the SUPERSTRUCTURE. "To whom coming" and "continuing to come," "ye also as living[1] stones are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

1. The materials are "living stones." Such are Christian believers. Drawn out of nature's quarry, they are cut and polished by the Spirit of the living God, and are then prepared for the place they are to occupy in the temple of the Lord of Hosts. The figure is a bold one, for, it may be asked, do stones live? Yet it is a most appropriate one; for dull and shapeless things as stones are, yet under the skill of the lapidary they receive new forms and take so fine a polish that when brought together they glitter in the light of the mid-day sun, as did the stones of the temple that stood on Zion's hill. Even so do Christians live. Dead, by nature, in trespasses and sins; and often, moreover, so unseemly and so stained that it might be supposed impossible to kindle them into life, yet by the grace of God they are quickened, cleansed, and purified; whilst some of them at least take such a high spiritual polish that they shine with a lustre surpassing far the lustre of the diamond, the amethyst, or the ruby.

[1] Not lively, as in our version; the word is the same as before—ζῶντες.

Of such materials must God's house be built. He dwelleth not in temples made by hands. What are buildings of stone, however beautiful their architecture, in His esteem? *Men* are attracted by what is outwardly imposing—the lofty arch, the marble column, the decorated altar, the mitred priest; but HE looks at the worshipper himself, and the worship He accepts is that of a broken and a contrite heart—that of a believing, joyful spirit.

But are no other materials but living stones incorporated into this temple? None whatever. Even the foundations of the New Jerusalem—those portions that are hidden out of sight—are of precious stones, and to use, in the construction of this glorious edifice, dead souls, or men destitute of the life of God, would be detrimental to its strength and beauty. Possible it is to build, in the *visible* Church of Christ, and even on the right foundation, wood, and hay, and stubble; but such materials will not stand the test of the fire to which they will be subject, but will be utterly consumed; whence St. Paul warns the builders to take heed how and of what materials they build (1 Cor. iii. 11-15): "For every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it."

Doubtless there are degrees of life and beauty in these living stones. All are not equally polished; all are not equally capable of being; but if there is life at all in the soul of the believer some niche or corner will be found for him in this temple. Even babes in Christ are not rejected

by the great Architect, for He said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." He will find a place for the youngest—yes, and for the poorest who will trust in Him; and it may be a far better one than some of them anticipate. To see additions made to the Church is a joy to all its members; but we do not want formalists, or hypocrites, or half-decided professors, for these are the wood, and hay, and stubble that will hereafter be consumed. We long to see additions of sincere penitents and genuine converts, for these only will coalesce with the spiritual temple—these only will abide in the day of the Lord's coming.

2. Composed of such materials, this temple is called a spiritual house. God has had three temples on earth—the temple of stone, the temple of Christ's body, and the living temple of the Church. The first was destroyed and swept away, the second was removed, and is now in heaven, the third remains, and will continue to grow until the top stone be brought forth with shoutings,—"Grace unto it." In the temple of stone the Shechinah dwelt; in the temple of Christ's body dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead; in the temple of the Church the Spirit dwells, filling all its courts with the light and glory of the Lord. Each believer's body is a temple of the Holy Ghost; but the real temple is the aggregate of believers of every place and name. It is a spiritual temple, and St. Paul says of it that it is "fitly framed together" (Ephes. ii. 21). It possesses, therefore, harmony, symmetry, and beauty, such as neither

Solomon's temple, nor Herod's, nor Diana's, at Ephesus, could boast. As in a building successive layers of masonry are laid, each layer being superinduced upon the former one, so has the Church of Christ been rising from the beginning, fitly framed together, the grand design of the architect being always kept in view. That design is not to make it like ordinary temples, attractive to the outward eye, but a temple which shall be holy, pure, and glorious to the eye of faith—"Even a habitation of God through the Spirit."

"Ye are *built up* a spiritual house," says the Apostle. The word he uses means "edifice," and is significant of the fact that, by the use of certain means—such as prayers, reading, meditation, and attendance upon the public ordinances of the Church, believers, or living stones, are united together in a habitation of God, each separate stone being full of vitality, and the whole building animated with the life which dwells in the corner-stone.

But if so our separate churches are only parts of this vast temple in proportion to their spirituality. They may grow in numbers, in wealth, in respectability, and they may erect gorgeous edifices in which to meet and worship God; but if they do not grow in holiness, and purity, and love, they are in danger of being separated from the one great temple, as are the wood, and hay, and stubble of those individual members whose piety is worthless and unreal.

3. But a temple must have a priesthood, and in this spiritual house there is a *holy priesthood.* It would seem as if here there was a confusion of metaphors, but it is not really so, for the temple is the priesthood, and the priesthood are the temple. In the temple of stone they were, of course, distinct; and not only so, but the priesthood were an order of men separate from the generality of the worshippers, and alone permitted to enter the holy place, whilst the holiest place could be entered by the high priest only once a year. That economy has passed away, and whilst we have a great High Priest who has entered within the veil, and who ever liveth to make intercession for us, every living stone in the temple is also a consecrated priest, and has access by faith into the holiest of all by the blood of the everlasting covenant. Such honour have all the saints. Hence Christian ministers are not priests in any other sense than that in which the people are priests. They are called and set apart to preach the Word of God, and to administer the holy sacraments in the congregation; but, even when doing the latter, their functions are not sacerdotal—they do not mediate between the people and God; nor are they, necessarily, more holy than others, or permitted to approach any nearer to the mercy-seat. You —the people—are the priesthood, and upon every one of you will the oil of consecration be poured if you fully yield yourselves to God.

But the priesthood is a *holy* one. Not with unhallowed

hands may you touch the ark of God, not with sullied feet may you tread the courts of His house. The priesthood under the law was ceremonially clean; the priesthood under the Gospel must be truly clean. Sprinkled, not with the blood of bulls and of goats, but with the precious blood of Christ, must each believer be sanctified throughout spirit, soul, and body; for then only will he be prepared for his sacerdotal functions, and then only will the Lord accept an offering at his hands. "The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are"—the priesthood of God is holy, which priesthood ye are.

4. A temple implies sacrifices, and they are offered here. But of what kind? In the temple of the Jews, and in all heathen temples, sacrifices were offered of bulls, and calves, and goats; for without these even the true God could not be approached by sinful man. Yet in themselves they were of no value; and there was a time when God said, "I am full of them" (Isaiah i. 11), for they meant nothing, and had become empty rites presented by men of unclean hands and hearts. The sacrifices of God always were, and still are, spiritual sacrifices—the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart—the sacrifice of earnest prayer and faith—the sacrifice of a holy and devoted life.

Judaism was a religion of rites and ordinances, which were carefully and elaborately prescribed; for it was intended for the childhood of men, and presented to them, as in a series of pictures, the lessons of God's holy will.

But it is now antiquated—it has passed away, and Christianity, which takes its place, prescribes no ritualism, but teaches us to worship God in the spirit, alike in every place. It enjoins that everything shall be done "decently and in order," but it neither commands us to build churches, nor to rear altars, nor to offer incense; and those to whom gorgeous ceremonies in grand cathedrals are alone tasteful, are certainly mistaken as to the very nature of the religion of Jesus Christ. A true Christian will worship God anywhere—in the way-side kirk, in the village chapel, in the lowly hut, as well as in the ornate and elaborate structure of Grecian or of Gothic architecture. The sweetest incense he can offer is that of heartfelt prayer; the purest vestment he can put on is that of the righteousness of Christ; and the most acceptable sacrifice he can present is the living sacrifice of himself.

But is not the eucharist a sacrifice—a commemorative sacrifice of that offered on the cross.[1] So the Church of Rome affirms, and even more, for it teaches the dogma of transubstantiation, and calls the rite the sacrifice of the mass. But the eucharist is never so spoken of in the New Testament. It is a feast upon a sacrifice, but in partaking of it we offer no atonement for sin, for that was offered by

[1] The word *eucharist* never occurs in the English New Testament, though it frequently does in the Greek. It is rendered in 1 Cor. xiv. 16 "giving of thanks," and it came to be used for the Lord's Supper because that was considered the highest expression of thanksgiving. See the Liturgies.

our Lord once for all, but only bring to mind His cross and passion, and exercise our faith therein. And with such sacrifices as these—prayer, praise, alms for the poor, and ourselves with all we have—God is well pleased. They are acceptable to Him not for any merit of their own but through Jesus Christ, the one High Priest in whose name we offer them, and through whose intercession we approach the mercy-seat (Isaiah lvi. 7).

Such is the living temple now in course of erection. Are you part of it—living stones in this grand edifice? and builders, in it, of yourselves and others? Are you continually presenting to God the sacrifice of a holy life implanted in you by the power of the Spirit from on high? Consider these questions, and keep the temple of your own nature pure.

THOUGHTS OF OTHER MINDS.

Ver. 4. If St. Peter's seat or chair had been as the pole-star, whereto our belief, as the mariner's needle, should be directed, lest we float we know not whither in the ocean of opinions; were the bosom of the visible Church the safest harbour our souls in all storms of temptation could thrust into, this Apostle was either an unskilful pilot, or an uncharitable man, that would not before his death instruct them in this course for the eternal safety of their souls, whose bodily lives he might have commanded to have saved his own. Had perpetual succession in his see, or apostolical tradition never interrupted, been such an Ariadne's thread (as now it is thought) to guide us through the labyrinth of errors, such was St. Peter's love to truth, that he would have so fastened it to all faithful hearts, as none should ever have failed to follow it, in following which he could not err. Doubtless, had any such conceit

lodged in his breast, this discourse had drawn it out; his usual form of exhortation had been too mild, his ordinary style too low. This doctrine had been proclaimed to all the world, with anathemas as loud and terrible as the canons of any Papistical council report.—DR. THOS. JACKSON.

Ver. 5. It is obvious, then, how fit, how essential it was, that there should be a temple of stone for the partial dispensation; the presence of God in Christ for the transition state, when it was yet partial, but preparing to be extended; and for this last dispensation, which was to embrace all the world, what temple would have been sufficient, but a temple co-extensive and identical with the worshippers themselves? As in the true atonement, there was no victim worthy of the priest, but He who combined both in his own person; so, in the true worship, there could have been no adequate temple, unless the worshippers and the temple had been the same.—BISHOP HINDS.

Ver. 5. It is the altar, and the altar alone, which sanctifieth the gift. Apart from Christ and His perfect sacrifice, an acceptable gift is an impossibility for man. For at best our gifts have in them the sinfulness of our nature; they are miserably flawed by defectiveness of motive, duplicity of aim, infirmity of will. "The prayers of all saints,"—what force of impetration must they have with God, if, as we are assured, "the effectual fervent prayer of a (single) righteous man availeth much!" Yet when St. John saw in a vision "the prayers of all saints" offered by an angel "upon the golden altar which was before the throne," it was in union with that which alone can perfume the tainted offerings of even regenerate man; "There was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it *with* the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne."—DEAN GOULBOURN.

Ver. 5. Now, in that Christ is compared to the foundation, and believers to stones built on Him, it sheweth the near conjunction that is between Christ and them; as stones are joined to the foundation by mortar, so are believers to Christ by the Spirit. Accordingly, He is compared to a head, and the Church to the body; He to the vine, and the Church to the branches. Such a union is between Christ and believers as is between the husband and the wife—no more twain, but one; bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. Before a man have faith, he is as a dead stick or stone, by faith he is united to Christ; which is

signified by these and the like speeches, eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood, which is to believe in Him, shewing that as the meat we eat is turned into our substance, and nearly joined to us, so are we to Christ by believing in Him; and this is a real and true union, but a spiritual one. Not that we are, thereby, united to Christ's soul, but to His body also, and by His humanity to His Deity, and by both to God the Father, and the Holy Ghost, which is an admirable prerogative. If any say, How can this be, Christ being in heaven and we on earth? it is so by the Spirit on God's part, and faith on ours; those join things far distant in place most nearly together.—ROGERS.

Ver. 6, 7. Too many who are called Christians live as if under the Gospel there were no sacrifice but that of Christ on the cross. And, indeed, there is no other that can atone for our sins, or satisfy the justice of God. Though the whole Church should offer up herself as a burnt sacrifice to God, yet could she contribute no more towards bearing away the wrath to come, than those who stood near Christ when he gave up the ghost did toward the darkening of the sun or shaking of the earth. But what is not necessary to this sacrifice, which alone redeemed mankind, is absolutely necessary to our having a share in that redemption. So that, though the sacrifice of ourselves cannot procure salvation, yet it is altogether needful to our receiving it.—DR. BREVINT.

IX.

THE DIGNITY OF CHRISTIANS.

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a possession; that ye may publish the virtues of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light. Which in time past (were) not a people, but are now the people of God, which were not pitied, but are now compassionated"—(*Chap.* ii. *v.* 9, 10).

We live in a world of contrasts. Light and darkness, joy and sorrow, grace and sin, stand opposed to one another, and often seem to intermingle and become one. Yet they never do. The distinction, if not always marked, exists; and in the eye of God, if not of man, is clear and definite. In human characters it is specially so, for though we are not able to draw the line which separates the good from the wicked, God is able, and makes no mistakes. There are traits of excellence in the unconverted, and there are traits of defect in Christians, and thus the difference between them is not always very striking,—the contrast not always very decided; yet there *is* a difference, there *is* a contrast; and the all-searching eye of the Supreme discerns it, and puts a difference between the holy and unclean, between those who serve God and those who serve Him not.

What a contrast is there between the disobedient who stumble at the living stone, and those to whom that stone is precious! The Apostle speaks of it here; and the

honour conferred upon believers is set forth by an accumulation of significant terms which, by the Jewish readers of this epistle, would be readily understood. Observe—

I. THE DIGNITY OF CHRISTIANS. Two passages from the Old Testament are applied to them by St. Peter—Isaiah xliii. 20, 21, and Ex. xix. 6—and thus they are viewed as the antitype of the Israelites, or as the true Israel of God.

1. They are a chosen generation, or an elect race.[1] Subsequent to the flood the great mass of mankind had become idolaters, when God called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees, and made him the father of a new race, who should preserve His worship and hand down His name to future ages (Gen. xii. 1, 2 ; xvii. 6 ; xxiv. 35). That was a grand event, and by faith Abram obeyed the call, and ere long his name was changed to Abraham, and in the line of Isaac his seed was called, which ultimately, through Jacob, became the Jewish race. Is that race God's elect now? He has not cast them off. He has not utterly forsaken them. For their fathers' sakes they are still beloved ; but they are scattered far and wide, nor is it even known where the ten tribes are.

No ; the elect of God are not now the descendants of Abraham according to the flesh, but his believing children who partake of his faith. One is their Father, even God ; one is their Savionr, even Christ ; one is their Enlightener and Sanctifier, even the Holy Ghost ; and thus they form

γένος ἐκλεκτὸν. Comp. verse 5.

one race, though belonging to different nations of the earth, and are chosen to bear the name of the Most High, and to declare that name to the end of the world. "This people," He says, "have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise" (Isa. xliii. 21). And to-day it is a numerous people, a vast and mighty race, nor will it cease to multiply until all God's purposes are accomplished, and heaven is filled with a teeming population.

If you belong to this race, it is not because you have been born of noble ancestors, but because you have been born again—born "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i. 13; James i. 18). Christians are a re-born people, and are thus dignified beyond the descendants of kings and princes, even though by their natural birth they were plebeians, or slaves, or serfs.

2. They are a royal priesthood. "Ye shall be unto me," said God to Israel, "a kingdom of priests;" for though the tribe of Judah was the royal tribe, and that of Levi the priestly tribe, yet all the tribes were both royal and priestly, and every individual Israelite was a priest-king unto God.

Yet *their* dignity was only typical, and, in reference to the priesthood in particular, none of the tribes could approach the tabernacle but that of Levi, and none of the families could enter the holy place but the family of Aaron, the high priest.

But Christians are indeed a royal priesthood. Through

the great High Priest of their profession they have all access into the holiest place, and there they can offer the incense of prayer, there present a liturgy of praise, and there offer up the living sacrifice of themselves. Their song, therefore, whilst yet on earth, is "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen"—(Rev. i. 5, 6), and the same strain they upraise when they enter the courts above, for they sing a new song in which they say, "Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. v. 10).

They are *kings*, for, though they have not yet received their crowns, their heads are adorned with coronets of beauty; and they reign in that kingdom which is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

They are *priests*, for, though they do not yet enter personally into the holiest place, their representative is there; and, to the eye of their faith, the veil is rent, and they kneel at the mercy-seat with confidence and hope (Heb. iv. 15, 16, x. 19-23).

Each one of them is a priest-king, however humble his earthly lot, and poor his temporal estate. No need has he to envy the great ones of this world; for he is far above them, and superior to them; and whilst their names, and titles, and wealth will pass away, *his* will endure through the ages of eternity (Heb. xii. 28).

3. They are a holy nation. Such the Israelites were called. They were united into a people having one form of government, and one system of laws and ordinances. Their national character was more distinctive than that of any of the families of the earth; and though they could not boast of such splendid palaces as those of Egypt, or such powerful armies as those of Assyria and Babylon, yet in the days of Solomon they had their glorious temple and their far-famed metropolis; and, above all temporal advantages, they had Jehovah as their king, and "to them were committed the oracles of God" (Rom. iii. 1).

Are Christian believers a nation, or do they possess any national characteristics? They have no visible nationality; for to represent Rome as their metropolis, and the Pope as their head, is ridiculous and absurd. Yet a nation they are, and no nation under heaven possesses such glory and honour as they. Jesus is their king, the Bible is their statute-book, the heavenly Jerusalem is their chief city, and "Holiness to the Lord" is written upon its gates. Holiness has never yet been a characteristic of *any* nation, for the Jews were not morally *holy*, even in their best and brightest days. But Christians are a *holy* nation; and as God looks down from the habitation of His glory, He sees there, separated from all the inhabitants of the earth, a sealed and consecrated race.

It is true that Christendom is not holy; but Christendom and Christians are by no means identical. The former

word is applied to those portions of the globe in which Christianity is professed in any form whatever; the latter, in its proper sense, applies to true believers only; and they *are holy*, for they are born of the Spirit from on high. This is another mark of your dignity, O ye followers of Christ! You are a holy nation, and your holiness becomes more and more mature as you acknowledge your fealty to your Sovereign Lord, and as you walk in His statutes and keep His laws. You cannot serve the world, you cannot yield to the lusts of the flesh, you cannot submit to the yoke of Satan, and be consistent. By your profession you are seated in the heavenly places, and your spiritual foes are underneath your feet. Keep them there, and act worthily of your national greatness.

4. They are a peculiar, or, as the word means, an acquired people[1]—a people acquired for a possession. "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me," said God to Israel (Ex. xix. 5). "For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God; the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deut. vii. 6). What a sacrifice did God make on their behalf when, to ransom them from Egypt, He slew the first-born of the Egyptians, and when, to prepare the land of Canaan for their possession, He swept away its former inhabitants. Israel was indeed a special people—a purchased people, a most distinguished people.

[1] λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν.—God's own; a people for a possession.

But in a far higher sense are Christians such. They are indeed the Lord's own, and, in His sight, a very precious treasure. He looks upon them with greater pleasure than upon the sun shining in his strength, or upon the whole material creation in its grandeur; and He has done more to secure them as His peculiar possession than He did in bringing the universe of matter into existence. He gave for them not a nation, not a world, not a host of angels, but His beloved Son, of whom St. Paul says, that He "gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus ii. 14). The same word, περιούσιον, is there used, as here, and it is found nowhere else in the New Testament. But it is a very significant word, and is indicative of the fact that those who accept the Atonement become a sanctified and holy people whom God delights in, and of whom He says, "They shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels" (Mal. iii. 17). Now they are scattered over many lands, but His eye is on them wherever they are; and one day He will send His angels to gather them, and they will form a galaxy of light, like gems of the purest lustre, to adorn their Saviour's head.

III. THE PURPOSE of all this dignity is expressed in the next clause of the passage, "that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." Observe what God has done for Christian believers, and what they are to do for Him.

1. God has *called them out of darkness.* Darkness was the element of their being. They lived in it, breathed in it, walked in it, sat in it. And who can describe what that darkness was? The Jews to whom this epistle was specially addressed were formerly in the darkness of Pharisaic pride, or Sadducean unbelief, and when the light came they shrank from it for a while, and would not come to it because they loved the darkness better. The Gentiles were wrapped in the darkness of heathenism; and, without God, were without hope in the world, having no bright prospects for the future—eternity almost a blank.

And what of ourselves? Were we not in darkness—in the darkness of sin and unbelief, wanderers on the dark mountains; living in the midst of light, but hating it, and turning from it as from a deadly foe?

But God called us out of that darkness. We heard the voice of conscience, we heard the voice of ministers, we heard the voice of the Spirit; and all these voices said to us, "Come, leave the darkness in which you are enwrapt, and step into the glorious region of the light of life." We listened, and, as in a moment, perhaps, it seemed as if an angel came to us, as to Peter in prison, broke our chains, opened our prison doors, and led us by the hand, not, as in his case, into the night, but into the morning dawn; and thus, ere long, the Sun of Righteousness arose upon us with healing in His wings.

The natural light is marvellous. Who can describe it?

Who can tell us what it is? Theories of light have been propounded, and some have thought that it is an ethereal and imponderable substance shooting forth in straight lines from the sun and from the fixed stars; whilst others, with greater probability, describe it as a succession of undulations of a subtle elastic fluid diffused through space. It is a marvellous phenomenon—marvellous in its origin, its properties, and its effects. But if the natural light is marvellous, still more so is the light of grace; it is searching, renovating, purifying, life-giving light, and into it every believer has been brought—into the light of the Sun of Righteousness, or of Him who said, "I am the Light of the World." And in that light he walks, and it increases in its brightness until it conducts him into the light of everlasting day. O what a work has God done for us, and how, as children of the light, ought we to rejoice from day to day!

2. What are we to do for Him? "We *should shew forth His praise,*" says the Apostle here. But the language is much stronger,[1] and may be rendered, "that ye should publish the virtues of Him who hath called you." If I may use such an expression, believers are to be the Lord's trumpeters. They are to tell out, as with a loud voice

[1] ὅπως τὰς αρετὰς ἐξαγγείλητε. Cf. Isa. xlii., where the Sept. reads, "They shall tell out His excellences in the isles." The word ἀρετή is used once only by St. Paul, Phil. iv. 8, where it is rendered *virtue;* and by St. Peter again in 2nd Epis. i. 3, 5, where it is also rendered *virtue.* It occurs nowhere else in the N. Test.

that shall ring throughout the world, how great things God has done for them. "This people have I formed for Myself, they shall shew forth My praise" (Isa. xliii. 21). In the market-place; on the house-tops; in the public highway; they are to stand up and declare, as circumstances permit, the virtues or attributes of the Divine name, and especially the omnipotence of God, which removed every obstacle to their salvation, and the mercy of God which condescends to effect it.

God has called us out of darkness that we may call others out of it. He has brought us into light, that we may invite others to share in its glorious beams. We are to give wide-spread publicity to what He has done for us, and never to be ashamed of speaking of His blessed name. By word, and act, and temper, and disposition, we are to show how great a change has been wrought within us; and being in the light we are to reflect it—to let "our light so shine before men, that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in heaven."

"Ye are my witnesses," saith the Lord to His people. Are we such, beloved? and are we bearing a clear, constant, and decided testimony to the glory of our Saviour's name? This is God's requirement: may we be faithful to it!

Gratitude demands this, for the Apostle adds, "Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have ob-

tained mercy."[1] The words are cited freely from Hosea ii. 23, where God says of Israel, in their then condition, that they were not His people, but would become such in the days of the Messiah. His people they had been, but they had lost their birthright; once they had obtained mercy, but, for a long while, they had been left without it. Now a wondrous change had been effected, for the lost had been restored, and the unpitied had won the heart of God.

Did this apply to Israelites?—how much more to Gentiles, and how much more to us, in particular, of these later times? We were not the people of God; we had not obtained compassion. We were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise" (Ephes. ii. 12). We were an exiled race, and were wanderers and foreigners in a far-off land. But *now* we are the people of God; *now* we have obtained compassion. Our names are registered on high, and the heart of God has been moved toward us with unutterable tenderness, so that we can with confidence say to Him, Abba, Father.

Ought we not to shew forth His praise? Ought we not to magnify His name? Were we to hold our peace the very stones might cry out. But we will not hold our peace; we will join with the triumphant host before the

[1] Two words are here used which in our version are both rendered alike. Alford translates "Who were unpitied, but now have obtained compassion."

throne in their song of adoration to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb. We will tell out the virtues of His name until the rocks, and hills, and valleys, and streams shall vibrate with His praise, and all nature shall resound, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

THOUGHTS OF OTHER MINDS.

Ver. 9. It is counted a matter of great moment unto noble families, if but for honour's sake, to know their descent from houses more ancient and sovereign (as of the king of Egypt, the prophet speaks that he was descended of ancient kings), that they have sprung from such and such marriages, and conjunctions of sovereign princes, although they be in alliance very far removed from them. So is this here to us; the saints they are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood," as Peter speaks, the royalest family heaven or earth affords, and that in respect of the descent thereof.—DR. T. GOODWIN.

Ver. 9. A man that hath but lightly tasted of the grace, goodness, and bounty of God in the Gospel, that hath always kept in the valleys of the visions thereof, and had communion only with the rudiments and first-beginnings of evangelical knowledge, can never be able to show out "the virtues of God," or bring them forth into a perfect light. Something in this kind such a person possibly may do: he may, as it were, whisper and stammer out in some broken manner somewhat of the transcendent excellencies of God. And verily this is the length of such a man's arm; he can lift up the name of God no otherwise, or upon no better terms in the world. But now persons that have, for a considerable space of time, dwelt much in the upper regions of the Gospel which border upon the third heavens, where life and immortality dwell, as it were, bodily; persons that have, with a clear eye of faith, seen the unsearchable riches of the grace of God in Christ, and know not how to fear, or whereof to be afraid, being full of the love of God, which casteth out fear; they are the only men that are able to speak a dialect proper to express those glorious things of God which are otherwise hard to be uttered, especially unto the world, being so dull of

hearing in this kind; the only men that know how to translate the virtues of God into such a language, whether by words or actions, that the world may come to some reasonable and competent knowledge of them.—JOHN GOODWIN.

Ver. 10. The phenomena of *light* and *vision* have for all minds surpassing interest, whether in regard to the beauty of light, or its utility. The beauty is seen spread over a varied landscape, in the verdure of fields and forests, among the beds of the flower garden, in the plumage of birds, in the clouds around the rising and setting sun, in the circles of the rainbow. And the utility is such that if a man had needed to supply his wants by groping in utter and unchangeable darkness, even if originally possessed of all the knowledge now existing in the world, he could scarcely have secured his existence for one day. Eternal night would have been universal death. Light, then, while the beauteous garb of nature, is also the absolutely necessary medium of communication between living creatures and the universe around them. The rising sun is what converts the wilderness of darkness which night covered, and which, to the mind of a child not yet aware of the regularity of nature's changes, is so full of horror, into a visible and lovely paradise.—DR. ARNOTT.

Ver. 10. It is the fearfullest thing in the world not to be the people of God; for if we be in poverty, trouble, captivity, under tyrants, yet it's nothing, so we enjoy the means of salvation; and if a nation have all plenty and peace, yet want the knowledge of God and Christ Jesus, it's nothing. So for a particular person, if he be never so poor, sick, imprisoned, hated, yet if the knowledge of God and Christ Jesus be in his heart, and true holiness, he is not miserable; and if all wealth, honour, health whatsoever can be put upon a man, if he be not a child of God, it's nothing. St. James bids the poor Christian rejoice, because he is made a Christian, exalted; the rich man to rejoice, because he is by the grace of God made lowly, not because rich.—ROGERS.

X.

OUR PILGRIM LIFE; HOW TO PURSUE IT.

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul; having your behaviour comely amongst the Gentiles, that in the matter of which they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent through him, for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of those foolish men; as free, and not as using liberty for a cloak of your maliciousness, but as the servants of God, honour all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honour the king"—(Chap. ii. 11-17*).*

THE Apostle again touches on the note of Chap. i., 1 and 17, reminding those to whom he writes that they were sojourners and strangers[1] on the earth, and exhorting them to act as such. It is a fact which we should ever bear in mind. We are sojourners in the country in which we live, for it is not our home, not our fatherland, not the place in which we shall remain; but only the inn in which we dwell for a little while. We are strangers too, on our journey to another land, and we do not know how soon our pilgrimage will end. What, then, becomes us? The Apostle answers this question by a threefold exhortation, followed by a summary of the Christian's duties. These let us consider.

[1] παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους. See Chap. i. 1, where the second word is rendered as above.

I. THE THREEFOLD EXHORTATION: Abstain, suffer, submit. Ver. 11-16.

1. Abstain from fleshly lusts[1] which war against the soul. Fleshly lusts, or the lusts of the flesh, include all inordinate sensual gratifications of our physical nature, the divers lusts and pleasures to which the natural man is so great a slave. How far the Gentiles had been led away by them, in Apostolic times, we learn from the sad picture presented by St. Paul, in Romans i. 20-32, as well as from the writings of the Greeks and Romans themselves. Nor were the Jews much better, and in some respects they were even worse; for they sinned, in these respects, not only against the law of nature, but against the revealed law of God, in the possession of which they made their boast. But was it necessary to warn *Christians* against those lusts? Alas, men who have been long addicted to them find it no easy thing to shake them off; and hence the converts to Christianity in heathen lands have to be dealt with very gently, and watched over with the greatest vigilance. Nay; are we not ourselves in danger? Are there no Christian professors among us who pamper the flesh, who are far too fond of the platter and the wine glass, and who even seek pasture, as a German writer puts it, in sensual thoughts and gratifications? Yet these things war not against the body only, but against the

[1] σαρκικαὶ ἐπιθυμίαι. Cf. Ephes. ii. 3; 2 Pet. ii. 18. Also Gal. v. 15, 21, etc; 1 John ii. 16. "The world's accursed trinity." *Leighton.*

soul—the immortal part of man's nature, surrounding and assaulting it with terrible malignity, and sometimes taking it entirely captive. There are lusts, too, which have their seat in the soul itself, such as avarice, envy, idolatry, pride, and anger; and there are Christians whose carnal mind has not yet been thoroughly destroyed, and who find that these passions are continually warring with their better nature (Gal. v. 19-26). But can they be put away? Can they be crucified? Can they be entirely subdued? Many have sought to conquer them by taking up their abode in dens or caves of the earth, or by shutting themselves up in convents or monasteries, or by excessive fastings and self-inflicted pains. But not in this way can we crucify the flesh, but only by watchfulness and prayer, and especially by faith in Christ, through which we obtain the constant renewing of the Holy Ghost. Our *sinful* nature, with all its *sinful* lusts, must die daily, and if we bring the body into subjection, if we repel the rising of each sinful thought, we shall find ourselves the conquerors of *ourselves*, which is the greatest conquest we can possibly obtain. The man who, by faith in Christ, is the master of himself, is greater than a crowned king.

2. Suffer. Christians living as strangers among the Gentiles in apostolic times were spoken of as evildoers. Their characters were maligned, their motives were impugned, their conduct misrepresented in all manner of ways. All kinds of charges were brought against them,

and they were supposed to be the causes even of natural evils—the rise of the Tiber to the walls of Rome, earthquakes, famines, pestilences, and conflagrations; hence many of them were suddenly seized, and dragged away to the lions. Is our lot cast in happier times? In many respects it *is;* but the tongue of slander is not yet silenced, and there are Christians to-day, eminent for their piety, whom the world hates, and against whom it points the finger of scorn, if it is unable to do anything worse. What then? Ought they to resent the unkindness of their enemies? No; but as imitators of their Lord and Saviour, they must endure, as He did, with all meekness, having their behaviour, conversation,[1] or deportment, good and honest. The way to silence opponents is to treat them kindly, to return good for evil, to pray for their conversion, and thus to heap coals of fire upon their heads. Beholding your good works—*looking closely at them,* as the word means—your enemies will at length perceive that there is something in you which they cannot but admire, and will then be led to glorify God in the day of visitation. "See how these Christians love one another!" was often said in the early ages of the Church; and they not only loved *one another,* but they loved their fellow men, nursing the sick, watching over the diseased, and often taking the fever from them, and dying under it, when the heathen around them fled from their very touch.

[1] ἀναστροφή as in chap. i. ver 15, 18.

Such things told upon the public mind, and people saw that there was something in the Christians which they themselves did not possess. It is so still. By kindness, by forbearance, by love to their enemies, by a spirit of self-sacrifice on behalf of others, the followers of Christ put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; and, in thousands of instances, sceptics, infidels, and unbelievers have been made to blush before the charity and devotedness of an humble child of God.

Our object, however, should always be, not to make others speak well of us, but to lead them to glorify God. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. v. 16). And specially so in "the day of visitation," that day being sometimes a day of mercy, at other times a day of wrath. The latter is probably the principal meaning here. When God visits the nations with terrible judgments, such as plagues, pestilence, famine, and war, Christians are called to maintain their principles whatever it may cost them, and in doing so they win the approbation of the world, and bring honour to Him whose servants they profess to be. Act worthily of yourselves, and the reproaches of ungodly men will die away on the air.

3. Submit. The early Christians lived under heathen governments; which, in many respects, were despotic, cruel, and unjust. Some suppose that, when this Epistle was written, Nero was on the throne of the Roman

Empire, and what his reign was the pages of Tacitus and Suetonius describe. Yet the Apostles affirmed that "the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. xiii. 1, 5); that human institutions are, indirectly, of Divine origin; that there is no power which is not under the hidden sway of the Prince of the kings of the earth. Hence they taught submission to authority, and here St. Peter says, "Be subject to every ordinance of man," or "to every human institution, for the Lord's sake" and he specifies two classes of political powers whom Christians are bound to obey,—the *king*, who is supreme; and *magistrates*, who are appointed by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. Every government is bound to appoint magistrates, for there is no greater evil than anarchy; and, as human nature is constituted, evildoers there will be in every State, who must be put down and held in check, otherwise those that do well will neither have praise, nor security, nor peace. The punishments inflicted on transgressors by the laws of Rome were in many instances most severe; the dungeon, the furnace, strangulation, and crucifixion; but even in our own country the penal laws were, until recently, far more terrible than either justice or equity required. Were such laws in accordance with the will of God? Did He ever give authority to States or Governments to treat men cruelly, because they had done wrong? No; but He did not immediately interfere with them, but simply left

them alone, knowing that as the leaven of Christianity was thrown in among them it would subvert what could not be altered, and would modify what was too severe.

Accordingly, we owe to Christianity the repeal of many unjust and iniquitous laws; and if some laws still remain upon our statute-book which bear that character, it is right to seek their repeal by all legitimate means. Meanwhile, *in all lawful things* we are bound to obey, for "whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves condemnation." (Rom. xiii. 2).

What is the will of God in this matter? It is, that by well-doing, which includes submission to the constituted authorities, we should "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." The folly of men generally arises from their ignorance. It did so in the earliest ages, and their ignorance was made manifest in the false views they entertained respecting Christianity and its professors. But its professors behaved themselves in such a manner that they shut the mouths of their enemies as with a muzzle, for such is the meaning of the word; and in all the succeeding ages the truest of Christ's followers have always been the best citizens of the realm in which they lived. They would rather have died than violate their consciences in the rejection of their Lord; yet for their countries' sake, and in loyalty to their kings, they would risk their liberties and their lives. Let us imbibe their spirit; let us imitate their example.

"As free," says the Apostle—for these words (ver. 16) are to be connected with the preceding verse—"As free, and not using your freedom for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God." Christians are divinely free—free from the consciousness of sin, free from the bondage of the law; but they are at the same time servants of God, and, therefore, not above law. How, then, are they to use their liberty? Not by abusing it, as in all ages Antinomians have done; not by using it as a veil to cover their evil designs; but, as the servants of the Lord Jehovah, by walking worthily of their high profession, and thus proving that their liberty is not licentiousness.

II. A SUMMARY of the Christian's duties now follows:—"Honour all men; love the brotherhood; fear God; honour the king." A constellation, this, as Leighton calls it, of stars of the first magnitude, set in our moral hemisphere to be contemplated and admired by all.

1. "Honour all men." This duty has no limits. All men, without exception, possess a certain value, first, as the creatures of God, and secondly, as redeemed by Christ. Men were made in the similitude of God, whether they are black or white—whether they are bond or free (James iii. 9); and men everywhere, of every nation under heaven, are the purchase of Christ's blood, who gave himself a ransom for all. Is there then a human being, however poor, sinful, or degraded, whom you have a right to trample upon and enslave? No; when the image

of the monarch is stamped upon the coin, no one may presume either to reject that coin or to undervalue it; and the image of the Creator is stamped upon every man that comes into the world. It may have been injured, and almost defaced, but it is not destroyed, and as long as the faintest lineament of it remains, the man is to be treated as a man, and not as a beast or as a stone.[1] It is true that we cannot esteem all men equally, and therefore the Apostle Paul counsels us to give "honour to whom honour is due" (Rom. xiii. 8); and in different degrees we must honour our superiors, our masters, and our parents, as their position in society entitles them to honour. But a measure of esteem is due to every man, and hence, to buy and sell men in the market like cattle, and to treat them as Negro slaves were treated but a few years ago in the British colonies and in the United States, was an iniquity which was opposed to the very genius of Christianity, and which Christianity has swept away, and will, wherever it is still maintained. Yes; the sons of Africa, dark as is their skin, and mean as are their intellectual powers, as some conceive, shall one day be rescued from the thraldom that oppresses them, and shall stand up as free men to take their place in the polity of the nations, and that a higher one, it may be, than the proud European imagines possible.

But the term *all men* includes the female sex, and

[1] "We touch heaven," says Novalis, "when we lay our hand upon a human being."

children; for in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female, both being one in Him. All the religions of the world, Christianity excepted, have more or less degraded woman. Even Judaism scarcely placed her where she has a right to be; but from the moment that Mary became the mother of the Messiah, the sex was elevated, ennobled, and made equal to the opposite one. And now woman is to be honoured, as, in thousands of instances, she is worthy of being; and for a Christian to despise her, or treat her with disdain, would be a dishonour to himself, and would cover him with disgrace. Let wives and daughters, as well as husbands and sons, be treated with all possible respect. Honour is due *to them*, and in England, at least, which rejects the Salic law, and permits a queen to sit upon the throne, they are honoured, and shall be, though as yet some laws that are unjust to them remain on our statute-book, and must, ere long, be repealed.

2. "Love the brotherhood." Such is the Christian Church —a brotherhood, a household of faith; one is their Father, even God; one is their Saviour, even Christ; one is their Guide and Comforter, even the Holy Ghost. There is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all"—(Ephes. iv. 5, 6). Has any one section of the Church the right, then, to call itself "*the brethren*," or "*the Church?*" No; all are brethren who hold the Head, even Christ, and brotherly love leaps over all sectarian barriers, and flows

towards everyone who walks worthily of his Christian profession. Inimical to it is all strife, and debate, and bitter controversy; and the day will come when it will so far prevail as to sweep them utterly away. The Psalmist, in his day, compared it to the precious ointment upon the head of the high priest, the odour of which was so rich and pleasant; and to the dew which descended on the mountains of Zion so plentiful and refreshing that it caused everything to live (Ps. cxxxiii.). O that it might indeed pervade our dwellings, and take possession of our breasts! Let us love Christ more, and then we shall love our brethren more. Brotherly love is enkindled at the cross, and in *its* precincts only will it continue to glow.

It will display itself in a thousand ways, and that spontaneously, and without effort. Just as the sun cannot but shine, and the flowers of the field cannot but give forth their beauty and their perfume, so brotherly love cannot but go forth in acts of kindness, tenderness, and compassion towards the objects of it; and what it gives it receives back again, though perhaps in other forms. It must be reciprocated or it cannot long be vigorous and healthy. If, then, you wish your Christian brethren to love you, love them; and let this brotherly love act and re-act upon every heart until every heart is aglow with the sacred flame.

3. "Fear God." This duty comes next, because he who fears God loves his brethren, and because it is the highest principle by which men can be actuated in all the relation-

ships of life. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and, therefore, the beginning of goodness, charity, love, and holiness.

As already observed, the fear which the Apostle inculcates is not a servile fear, but the fear of holy reverence which draws near to God—as did Moses at the burning bush—with naked feet, but yet draws near. "Art thou afraid of God?" said Augustine, "rush into His arms." The Christian *is* afraid of God's judgments, but he hides himself from them by confiding in His love. O how sweet it is to revere God! It is to recognise His presence always—to be always conscious of His all-seeing eye; but it is to know that His encircling arms are those of a loving, gracious Father, and, therefore, to trust in Him with a childlike love. And the man that truly fears God fears no one else. Just as Noah, when building the ark, encountered the jeers and scoffs of his neighbours, but went on building, so the God-fearing man cares little for the paper bullets with which a godless world assails him, for he knows that he is right, and he can wait until the day shall come when God will vindicate His own (cf. Acts x. 19, 20).

Nor will the man that fears God fear the devil. He may be surrounded by his fiercest emissaries, and assailed by his most fiery darts; but the fear of God will be his shield, to protect him from them all; for his answer to every temptation of the foe will be, "How can I do this wickedness and sin against God?"

But do Christians need to be thus admonished? Yes; for, because God is the invisible One, even they are in danger of forgetting Him, and, therefore, of being light, trifling, and immoderate in their conversation and deportment. "Fear God" is, then, one of the mottoes which they should write upon the walls of their houses, and upon the palms of their hands; lest, forgetting His august and sacred presence, they should give way to levity, and even utter the Divine name with irreverence and unconcern.

4. "Honour the king" is repeated here from ver. 13, and perhaps also refers to Prov. xxiv. 21. A heathen was on the throne of Rome when this Epistle was written; nay, probably a tyrant, a despot, a cruel persecutor of the followers of Christ. Yet, in virtue of his office, some honour was to be paid to him; and in so far as Christians could do it without violating their consciences, they were to obey his laws, and to respect his person. The Divine right of kings to do what they like is nowhere taught in the sacred Scriptures; hence Saul was rebuked by Samuel, and Ahab by Elijah. Nor have kings the right to coerce their subjects, in matters of faith and conscience, for that is beyond their prerogative, and is a violation of their kingly office. We are bound to obey God rather than man, even though the man sits upon a throne of ivory, and sways a sceptre of gold.

Yet anarchy is a crime, and loyalty is a virtue; and, as the representative of Him by whom kings reign, the

monarch should receive due honour and respect. Happy the people who have a monarch whom they can respect! Happy the people who are loyal to their king or queen because their king or queen is worthy of their loyalty and love! Such is the happiness of the British nation to-day, whose sovereign is one of the best that ever sat upon a throne, and who is, therefore, worthy, not merely of our submission, but of our highest honour and esteem. And, happily, Victoria reigns in the hearts of her people, for her people know that she deserves their love.

THOUGHTS OF OTHER MINDS.

Ver. 11. A pilgrim bears his troubles quietly, looking for no other whilst he is thus from home; though he be stopped here, stocked there, mocked at as he goes, yet he comforts himself with this, that he shall, ere long, be in his own country where he is known and loved, and shall meet with no more such, but all good usage that his heart can desire. So true Christians bear their troubles patiently, if from the hand of God, or for his sake; sickness, losses, crosses—they look for no other in this vale of their pilgrimage. This comforts them, that they shall one day come to heaven, their resting-place, where they shall live with God in all blessedness for ever; and if other troubles come one after another, they think them no other than they made account of. It is God's wisdom that it should be thus, that heaven might be the sweeter, that we might long the more for it, and be weaned from hence. If an Englishman should be highly advanced in a strange country, he would the sooner forget his own; but in trouble he longs for his own, and is as glad of it as many soldiers who, having met with much hardness in other countries, have fallen flat when they arrived and first set foot in England again, and kissed the very ground, with "O welcome, sweet England!" If Christians meet with hard measure from the world, they bear out in hope of Heaven. If they were of the world, the world would love them.—ROGERS.

Ver. 11. The passions "war against the soul" by the disorders they introduce into that body, which they ought to preserve. They dissipate the spirits, weaken the memory, wear out the brain. Behold those trembling hands, those discoloured eyes, that body bent and bowed to the ground; these are the effects of violent passions. When the body is in such a state, it is easy to conceive that the soul suffers with it. The union between the two is so close that the alteration of the one necessarily alters the other. When the capacity of the soul is absorbed by painful sensations, we are incapable of attending to truth. If the spirits, necessary to support us in meditation, be dissipated, we can no longer meditate. If the brain, which must be of a certain consistence to receive impressions of objects, has lost that consistence, it can recover it no more.—SAURIN.

Ver. 13, 14. The power of the magistrate extends, and is intended to extend, to the actions of men, but not to their sentiments. He is appointed to reward well-doing, to punish evil-doing, to watch over that which God desires that men should do as members of human society, and that which He desires they should leave undone. Thus does authority rest upon a Divine foundation; and its historical existence may be viewed as a Divine institution, as the object of its existence is the maintenance of moral and Divine aims, to which all human society ought to consider itself subject for the sake of God. These are the aims which are binding on men in their conscience, and not from fear of authority alone. And not to the human institution, as such, does the Christian feel himself bound, but to it as the divinely appointed bearer and guardian of Divine and moral requirements made on human society.—HARLESS.

Ver. 17. To "honour," as the word signifies, is to estimate the value of anything, and to proportion our regards to the ascertained value. Apply this rule to man. Estimate his value by his Creator's love, and by his Redeemer's sufferings; by his own capacity of religion, of morals, of intellectual advancement, of pleasure, of pain; by his relation to a life and to a death to come; and you will then feel that to honour a man is to respect him under these views and relations; to be anxions for his welfare; to contemplate him, not only with benevolence, but even with awe and fear, lest a prize so glorious should be lost, lest a being so capable should be wretched for ever.—RICHARD WATSON.

XI.

CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE.

"Ye servants be subject to your masters in all fear, not only to the good and gentle but also to the perverse; for this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure griefs, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it if, when ye do wrong, and are buffeted, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well and suffer (for it) ye take it patiently, this is thankworthy with God. For hereunto were ye called; because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, threatened not, but committed (all) to Him that judgeth righteously; who His own self bare our sins in His own body upon the tree, that we, dying to our sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripe ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls"—(Chap. ii. 18-25*).*

CHRISTIANITY hallows all the relationships of life. Whatever rank or station men may occupy, it brings its elevating influence to bear upon them, sanctifying alike the noblest pursuits and the meanest drudgery in which they are employed.

Hence it exhorts servants as well as masters, children as well as parents; and both St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, for example (ch. v. 22-32, vi. 1-9), and St. Peter, in this Epistle, dwells at length on the relative duties of life, but in the most gentle manner, and in the finest spirit.

The word here rendered servants[1] means not slaves in the strict sense of the term, but domestic or family servants, and hence the exhortation here given is the more applicable to such in our own age and country. Their duty, and the example of the Lord Jesus which they are called to follow, are set before us in this paragraph.

I. THEIR DUTY. 1. "Servants, be subject to your masters in all fear." Such is its nature. The servants who are here addressed enter upon their work voluntarily, and are supposed to understand what it involves. Having done so, they are to be in subjection to their masters; not finding fault with their employment, or pursuing it in a slovenly manner, or going about it with an ill grace, as if they cared not whether it were attended to or not, but engaging in it gladly and with a cheerful spirit, as part of their duty to God, as well as to their fellow-men (cf. Ephesians vi. 5-7). Servants there are who do their work when they have no will to do it, and then it is sure to be poorly done. Let not the service you render your masters be a constrained and forced service, but a ready and a joyous one, remembering that, however humble it may be, it is ennobled by the religion you profess. A certain degree of reverence is due to your masters, and therefore *in* all fear of them as your superiors, but not in dread, you should prosecute your work, and do

[1] οἰκέται. These were inmates of the house, and, though the word is often applied to menials, yet it was different from the word δοῦλοι, who were properly slaves. See Liddon and Scott's Lexicon.

whatever they require. Writing to Titus, St. Paul says: "Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again, not purloining"—that is, stealing—"but shewing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (ii. 9-10). There, however, another class of servants (δουλοι) are referred to; but the same advice is applicable to all, and servants of all kinds may, by an upright and Christian behaviour, bring great honour to their heavenly Lord and Master Jesus Christ.

2. But to what extent are they to submit? Some masters are good and gentle, exacting of their servants no more than they can do, and treating them with kind indulgence, knowing that they also have a Master in heaven. To serve such masters is pleasant and joyous, and, were masters wise, they would, even for their own sakes, treat their servants generously, for then would their obedience be a cheerful one, and their work be better done.

But there were in the Apostle's times, and still are, other kinds of masters—masters who are froward, or, as the word means, crooked or perverse,[1] like a piece of wood that cannot be bent and is unfit for use. Such masters are difficult to please, are often finding fault, are frequently scolding even their best domestics. And human nature cannot brook them. An unconverted servant will presently

[1] σκολιῶς—a very expressive word rendered *untoward* in Acts ii. 40, and *crooked* in Phil. ii. 15.

resent such treatment, and perhaps, in an ill temper, give notice to leave as soon as possible. But a Christian servant will put up with it, and it is just in such a position that his principles will shine in contrast with those which actuate the world at large. Has God placed you in a position of this kind—under a master who is hard, exacting, and ungenerous?—act worthily of your name and profession, and shew that master that there is something real in the religion you profess. "Not answering again" when you are unjustly scolded, but passing much by in perfect silence, is the apostolic injunction; and happy is that servant who has learnt the lesson.

3. A cogent reason is assigned. "For this is thankworthy"—literally *grace*—"if a man for consciousness of God endure grief, suffering wrongfully." "If ye love them which love you what thank have ye?" said our Lord (Luke vi. 32); or "what reward have ye" (Matt. v. 46)? And here the meaning is the same. If anyone, on account of the consciousness he has of God's presence and of the relation in which he stands to Him, endures tribulations, suffering wrongfully, he is worthy of praise, and will be accepted of God in the great day. "What glo[illegible] or what credit is due to you," says the Apostl[illegible] wrong and being buffeted[1] for it (beaten wi[illegible] boxed on the ear), ye shall endure it; b[illegible] and suffering for it, ye shall endu[illegible]

[1] Such is the [illegible]

of praise, and God will not fail to honour you when you stand before His bar."

Such, I believe, is a true paraphrase of the apostle's words, giving to each of them its due force. Let servants ponder them. Not unfrequently are they buffeted unjustly. Not unfrequently do crooked and perverse masters treat them with contempt and cause them to suffer when they are doing their best. What, then, must they do? They must endure, as seeing Him who is invisible: and if they get no credit for it from man they will get praise from God, and one word of approval from the lips of the Eternal is of more value, a thousand times, than all the applause of countless multitudes.

These exhortations apply not merely to household servants, but to all who are employed by others, in manufactories, in shops, in counting-houses, and in the labour of the field. All such persons are servants, and Christ expects of them obedience to their masters: while, as masters, it expects the just payment of their wages, the kindest consideration of their interests. How would be the relation [illegible] ployed in this coun[illegible] labour were duly [illegible] did not exact too [illegible] frequently tak[illegible] want and ru[illegible] would spring [illegible]

[illegible] masters and [illegible] on the [illegible] their [illegible] the [illegible] of [illegible] Peo[illegible] in the work[illegible]

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[1] Such is the meaning of the word κόλαφος.

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These exhortations apply not merely to household servants, but to all who are employed by others, in manufactories, in shops, in counting-houses, and in the labours of the field. All such persons are servants, and Christianity expects of them obedience to their masters; whilst, of their masters, it expects the just payment of their wages, and the kindest consideration of all their wants. How different would be the relative position of employers and of the employed in this country, and elsewhere, if, on the one hand, labour were duly valued, and, on the other, the labourer did not exact too much. Those lamentable strikes which frequently take place, plunging hundreds of families into want and ruin, would be unknown; and a reciprocal regard would spring up between the capitalist and the workman,

which, in the present state of things, is far too rare. But only when the spirit of the Gospel pervades society will this question and many kindred ones be solved. In vain do political economists attempt to unite the master and the servant, and to bring about a right understanding between them. Christianity only can effect this object, for Christianity only can rectify the springs of human thought, and renovate the affections of the human heart.

II. THE EXAMPLE of the Lord Jesus is set before us as the ground on which the submission should be practised.

"For even hereunto were ye called," says the Apostle (ver. 21), namely, to suffer patiently; for the great Master said, "If anyone will come after Me let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" (Matt. xvi. 24). "To afflictions we are all appointed" (1 Thess. iii. 4), and "Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts xiv. 22). Nor is this true of servants only, but of all Christians, and, therefore, to all Christians does the Apostle here speak, holding up before them the example of his Lord.

1. Christ suffered for us. He, the incarnate Son of God, was the prince of sufferers—a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Peter does not say here *what* He suffered, for the cross had been erected recently, and his readers knew of the wondrous Passion of their Lord. But He suffered *for us*, or, as some read, *for you*, which means on your behalf, and in your stead. The sufferings of

Christ were endured for our benefit; but they were also substitutionary, for He took our place, and His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree (ver. 24), and by His stripe we are healed. But to this thought we shall presently return; the question here is how did Christ suffer?

He suffered *undeservedly*, for "He did no sin." The Apostle here quotes, almost literally, the words of Isaiah liii. 9, "because He had done *no violence*, neither was any deceit in His mouth." He was a man like unto ourselves, but He was a perfectly sinless man—holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners (Heb. vii. 26; 2 Cor. v. 21), so that he could say, "the Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John xiv. 30), and of his enemies He could ask, "Which of you convinceth me of sin" (John viii. 46)? Yes, the Prince of this World came, often and again, but specially in the wilderness and in the garden, and a real conflict ensued between the Captain of our salvation, and the leader of hell's mighty hosts. But there was no response to the suggestions of the foe in the breast of the Son of God, and He flung back every dart, and came out of the battle-field uninjured and unscathed. Do we suffer undeservedly sometimes? Perhaps so; but never sinlessly. When we suffer, then, however conscious we may be that it is wrongfully, let us think of Him who was absolutely faultless, and yet suffered; and let us, as He did, patiently endure.

For He suffered *patiently*. No guile was found in His mouth. Though His enemies watched every opportunity that they might take hold of His words; yet when he was reviled with bitter language, and treated with the utmost indignity and shame, how did He endure it? He reviled not again. "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth" (Isai. liii. 7). Sometimes He was perfectly silent, and if at other times He spoke, yet He never reviled or threatened, but rather prayed for His enemies, and said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 34). Audibly that prayer was uttered, but once only; but often, doubtless, was it the prayer of our Saviour's heart, and thus the greatest of all sufferers was the most gentle and forgiving of all.

St. Peter was an eye-witness of the arrest and of the trial of our Lord, at least up to a certain point; and knew, therefore, what He suffered, and how patiently and submissively He endured. Ah! Peter himself took the sword and cut off the ear of Malchus, a servant of the high priest. Jesus rebuked him, and healed the wound by a touch of His wonder-working hand (John xviii. 10, 11; Luke xxii. 51). Did Peter remember this when he wrote these words? He could never forget those scenes, nor the part he took in them, and this is his testimony to the sinlessness of his Lord: "When He suffered He threatened not."

"He threatened not." At the very moment when He stood before Annas and Caiaphas He foresaw the terrible doom that was hanging over them and the land, yet He did not denounce their crime, or invoke God's judgments on their heads. Once He foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, but it was with tears; and now He said, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God;" but this was said as a warning, to lead them, if possible, to a better mind. What did He then? He committed all[1] to Him that judgeth righteously. He remembered that it was written, "to Me belongeth vengeance and recompense (Deut. xxxii. 35; cf. Rom. xii. 19), and He calmly waited until God should vindicate His cause, as vindicate it He did when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him on His own right hand in the heavenly places. And God is still the vindicator of the innocent. Are we anxious about our character and reputation? Do men malign us, and seek to injure us in the eyes of others? Let us be silent, calm, forgiving, and let us commit our cause into the hands of God. He judgeth righteously, and against His judgment there is no appeal.

But further, Christ suffered *vicariously*. Verse 24 stands connected with verse 21, and defines the expression, "He

[1] The word *Himself* is not in the Greek, and some insert "his judgment," whilst Alford adopts "*them*," *i.e.*, "His enemies." The word *all* embraces everything.

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[illegible]arn of me," was His own command, "for I am meek [illegible] lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls" [illegible] xi. 29). "I wish I was like my Saviour," said one [illegible] first she was placed in the school of suffering, "but [illegible] fretful, impatient, and disposed to murmur." Ere [illegible], however, the Spirit did His work in her heart, and [illegible]ugh she continued in that school for a long, long season, [illegible] prayer was chiefly on her lips, "Father, not my will [illegible] Thine be done."

3. The Apostle closes with another reason for Christian [illegible]mission. "For ye were straying like sheep, but ye [illegible]e returned now unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your [illegible]ls." By some expositors this clause is connected with the last of the preceding verse—"by whose stripe ye were [illegible]ealed," but it seems rather to be an additional ground for [illegible]llowing the example of the Lord Jesus. "All we like [illegible]heep had gone astray" (Isa. liii. 6). We had left the fold and pasturage in which we were placed, and where we had abundant supplies of all needful things; and like foolish, silly, thoughtless sheep, we had wandered into the wilderness, had exposed ourselves to all its perils, and were likely to be destroyed by beasts of prey. What a picture have we here of the condition of universal man! He is a wanderer on the dark mountains, without a guide or friend, and unless some one seeks him, and brings him back, he will wander on to his certain and irremediable ruin. And such [illegible] case. But happily we have returned, or

suffered *for us*," whilst it also brings the words of verse 22 to an antithetical climax. He had no sin of His own, but He took upon him our sins, and bore the chastisement of our peace in His own body on the tree. Again the Apostle refers to Isa. liii., where it is said, "His soul was made an offering for sin," for man's guilt was imputed to Him, and He expiated[1] it on the altar of the cross. Divine justice rendered such an expiation necessary, and He voluntarily undertook to offer it; for which purpose He became man, that He might have a sinless body and a spotless life to present in the stead of the legal sacrifices which could never take away sin (Heb. x. 7-10). And why? One answer is, "that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness," or, "that we, having died to sins, should live to the righteousness of Him." By the death of Christ our sins are expiated, and sin itself is slain within us. St. Paul unfolds the same grand truth when he says, "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism unto death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the

[1] The words *expiation* and *satisfaction* never occur in the N. Test., and only once in the Old (Num. xxxv. 3). But the idea of both is included in the words *atonement* and *propitiation*, the radical meaning of which is *to cover up*, or to hide from the sight of God. St. Peter does not use the word ἱλασμός, found only in 1 John ii. 2, iv. 10, nor the word καταλλαγή, found only in Rom. v. 11, where it is rendered *atonement*, and Rom. xi. 15, 2 Cor. v. 18, 19, where it is rendered *reconciliation*. But that he teaches the doctrine of substitution by the death of Christ there can be no reasonable doubt. See "Dale on the Atonement," 3rd edit. p. 121; and "Kurtz on Sacrificial Worship," p. 16, etc.

glory of the Father, we also should walk in newness of life." Being partakers of Christ's death, we die to sin; being partakers of His resurrection, we live unto righteousness (Rom. vi. 4, 10-12). The Apostle adds, "by whose stripe ye were healed," the word meaning the weal left by a stripe such as slaves often received. What a wonderful paradox is here! Sin leaves a scar upon the soul, but by the furrows made on the back of our Saviour, and the blood that oozed from His sacred wounds, even that scar, deep and ineradicable as it appears, may be removed, and we may be restored to health and vigour. So a German hymn says, beautifully—

> "Thou didst suffer stripe and weal,
> Treatment full of pain and shame;
> That my plague thou mightest heal,
> And my praise for ever gain."

2. In all this Christ was our example, and that example He has left behind that we should follow His steps (ver. 21). The word[1] signifies a pattern or copy-head, such as a writing-master gives to his pupils that they may imitate it closely. His foosteps were His life, His conduct, His spirit; and these we are to look at and to follow, putting as it were our feet within them, and thus walking as He also walked. The two figures blend into one. We imitate the copy-head when we tread in the footprints of our Lord.

[1] ὑπογραμμὸς a writing-copy, pattern, or model. The word is found nowhere else in the N. Test. It occurs in 2 Macc. ii. 28, Sept.

But what care, what diligence, what constant practice, does this require! When a scholar is learning to write he makes many a false stroke, and comes very far short of the pattern placed before him. When a traveller is following a guide over a difficult and dangerous road his feet often slip, and that guide, it may be, has to take him by the hand and lift him up. So is it with the Christian in his attempts to imitate his Lord. And many there are who say it is impossible; many there are who think the standard is beyond their reach. Now, it is true that we cannot imitate and come up to the perfect sinlessness of our Lord; yet His patience may be our patience, His submission our submission, His meekness our meekness; for the Holy Spirit can implant in us His mind, and can give us so much of it that we shall never murmur or repine, never yield to resentful passions, never be under the dominion of an acrimonious temper, but be filled always with charity and love.

And how blessed it is to have *such* a pattern! An artist who wishes to copy a celebrated picture would not copy from a copy if he had access to the original. And we, though we have many copies of Christ's character, and some of them very admirable ones, yet, having the original, must keep that before us, and be imitators of St. Paul and others only as they were imitators of Christ. This, and nothing less than this, is practical religion. We are Christians only in so far as we are like our Lord.

"Learn of me," was His own command, "for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. xi. 29). "I wish I was like my Saviour," said one when first she was placed in the school of suffering, "but I am fretful, impatient, and disposed to murmur." Ere long, however, the Spirit did His work in her heart, and though she continued in that school for a long, long season, one prayer was chiefly on her lips, "Father, not my will but Thine be done."

3. The Apostle closes with another reason for Christian submission. "For ye were straying like sheep, but ye have returned now unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." By some expositors this clause is connected with the last of the preceding verse—"by whose stripe ye were healed," but it seems rather to be an additional ground for following the example of the Lord Jesus. "All we like sheep had gone astray" (Isa. liii. 6). We had left the fold and pasturage in which we were placed, and where we had abundant supplies of all needful things; and like foolish, silly, thoughtless sheep, we had wandered into the wilderness, had exposed ourselves to all its perils, and were likely to be destroyed by beasts of prey. What a picture have we here of the condition of universal man! He is a wanderer on the dark mountains, without a guide or friend, and unless some one seeks him, and brings him back, he will wander on to his certain and irremediable ruin. And such was our case. But happily we have returned, or

"have been brought back," to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. Jesus is our Shepherd, and He Himself sought us and brought us back, for we never should have returned of ourselves. It was in seeking us that He was bruised, wounded, and died; but He returned to life again, and is still the seeking Shepherd, rejoicing over the recovery of another and yet another of His flock (John x. 15, etc.). He is the Good Shepherd, and the *Bishop* of our souls; our Guardian, our Pastor, our Chief Shepherd—the title ἐπίσκοπος being probably taken from Ezek. xxxiv. 11, 12). "For thus said the Lord God, Behold I, even I, will both search my people and seek them out (ἐπισκέψομαι). As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among the sheep that are scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day."

But have we indeed returned to Him? Then let us not wander from Him again, but let us follow Him constantly, imitating His example and treading in His steps. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my Father's hands" (John x. 32, 33). Thus He spoke, but He did not mean that it was impossible for a believer ever to fall from grace. Augustine said, "Those who are goats to-day may be sheep to-morrow;" and though it is not probable that one who is a sheep to-day will become a goat

to-morrow, since Christians who fall away, generally do so by little and little, yet, as Hooker said, "to our own safety our own sedulity is required;" and the solemn warnings addressed to believers in the New Testament against the danger of apostasy imply that the danger is a real one, for otherwise the warnings have no meaning.

Whether, then, we are servants or masters, princes or serfs, the example of our Lord must ever be before us, and, being healed by His stripe, we must now walk with Him in newness of life until He, the Chief Shepherd, shall appear the second time, when we shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away (1 Pet. v. 4).

THOUGHTS OF OTHER MINDS.

Ver. 20. If there be no patience in suffering, but when it is deserved, it is counterfeit patience and hath no reward of God; it is in comparison nothing; it is that which reason teacheth; but to bear patiently for well doing is a lesson for a high scholar. Howsoever, being simply considered, it is good and commendable, as for any being justly afflicted or punished by God or man, meekly to submit themselves, to confess their faults, and be desirous to amend thereby. Aaron held his peace, Eli and Hezekiah were submissive in theirs; the thief at the right hand acknowledged that he suffered deservedly. Thus, when delinquents are punished by the magistrate, people be rebuked of their ministers for their sin, servants and children are of their masters and parents corrected for their faults; they must take it patiently and learn to amend. —ROGERS.

Ver. 20. The style and language imports that such actions God takes not only well, as a master that commands things as a duty, but also as a friend, from the hands of a friend; not only with acknowledgment, "Well done, good and faithful servant," but with thanks, which we use

not to give to servants, but to friends, as having done us free courtesies. So that, although there are no works of supererogation, as in respect of what God doth and may command (Luke xvii. 19), yet there is such a performing of things commanded for the manner of it, as is over and above the force of the command, even out of freeness and ingenuity, as friends. And there are some such noble and heroical acts of obedience, as carry in their very appearance a principle above that of service, which respect the necessity of the command, that God thanks them for them, as a man doth his friend for a matter of courtesy; and they come to have a glory, a special grace in them, which simple obedience hath not.—DR. T. GOODWIN.

Ver. 21. He left His footsteps as a copy, as the word in the original imports, to be followed by us. Every step of His is a letter of this copy; and particularly in this point of suffering, He wrote as a pure and perfect copy of obedience, in clear and great letters, in His own blood. His whole life is our rule; not, indeed, His miraculous works —His footsteps walking on the sea, and such like—they are not for our following; but His obedience, holiness, meekness, and humility, are our copy, which we should continually study.

He that aims high, shoots the higher for it, though he shoot not so high as he aims. This is what ennobles the spirit of a Christian, the propounding of this our high pattern, the example of Jesus Christ.—LEIGHTON.

Ver. 22. The character of the Lord Jesus presents to us the harmony of a life which, in action as well as in suffering, was ever equally penetrated with the Spirit of God, which had its source in the perfect love of God, and realised itself in the highest love to man, and in an entire self-sacrifice for the salvation of the human race. In a word, it is the love of God manifested in a form purely human. Now, the idea of such a Being as this excludes the possibility of sin; for sin, which is in its very nature antagonistic to God, can find no place where selfishness, which is its essence and principle, is utterly abolished by the full energy of love to God and man.—ULLMAN.

Ver. 25. The natural state of mankind is like that of strayed sheep. It is a state of error, of want, of perplexity, of dissatisfaction, of danger. It is a state that gives no promise of improvement. The strayed sheep, if left to itself, will wander farther and farther from the fold, till it

perish of hunger, fall over the precipice, or be devoured by the wild beast.—DR. J. BROWN.

Ver. 25. Lost man can no more return unsought than a sheep that wandereth, which is observed of all creatures to have the least skill. Men may have some confused thoughts of returning; but to know the way and to come, unless they be sought, they are unable. This is David's suit, though acquainted with the fold, "I have gone astray like a sheep; Lord, seek thy servant." This did our great and good Shepherd, through those difficult ways he was to pass for finding us, wherein he not only hazarded, but really laid down his life; and those shoulders which did bear the iniquity of our wanderings by expiation, upon the same doth He bear and bring us back from it by effectual conversion.—LEIGHTON.

XII.

THE MARRIED STATE.

"In like manner, ye wives (by) submitting yourselves to your own husbands, that even if some disobey the word, they may without word (or speech) be won by the behaviour of the wives, beholding your chaste behaviour (coupled) with fear. Whose adorning let it not be the outward (adorning) of plaiting of hair, of wearing of gold, or putting on of garments, but the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price. For thus, in old time, the holy women also, who hoped in God, adorned themselves, submitting unto their own husbands; as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose children ye have become, if ye do well, and are not afraid of any terror. Ye husbands, in like manner, dwelling according to knowledge, with the woman as the weaker vessel, giving (them) honour, as being also heirs with you of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered"—(Chap. iii. 1-7.*)*

Of all the relationships of human life, that of marriage is the most sacred. And, the most sacred, it may also be, as it often is, the most blessed; but this will always depend upon the mutual love of the parties, for if they do not really esteem each other there will be endless jars between them, and their married life will prove to them a lamentable curse. How important is it, then, that married persons should be equally yoked together in the very best sense, and that, when the union has taken place, they should be governed by the highest principles of religion. But in the days of the Apostles there were many Christian wives who had unconverted husbands, and many Christian husbands

who had unconverted wives. Hence he addressed the married in the terms of this paragraph ; and who will say that the advice he gives is not equally necessary now ?

It has been asked why, having addressed servants, he did not proceed to speak to masters, as did St. Paul (Ephes. vi. 9 ; Col. iv. 1) ? And the answer is that probably there were not many *Christian* masters among the elect strangers to whom he wrote, the Epistle having been written to the Jews of the dispersion. But there were wives and husbands who needed counsel, and to them, after the manner of St. Paul (Ephes. v. 21-32), he here addresses himself, but in the wisest and most gentle manner.

I. TO WIVES. "Likewise"—or in like manner, as in chap. ii. 13, "wives be in subjection to your own husbands" (ver. 1-6). The exhortation has reference

1. To their submission and behaviour. The husband is the head of the wife, and to him therefore she owes obedience in all things lawful. Among heathen nations she was his slave, and his slave she often is to-day, for there are husbands, so-called, who keep their wives in the direst bondage, and who treat them, not as equals, but as vassals underneath their feet. Does Christianity countenance any such conduct ? No ; it elevates woman to her true position, and places the wife by her husband's side. It is, therefore, not a forced subjection that the wife is to be under, but a willing and a cheerful one, the yoke being easy and the service light.

It was not always so, however. Wives there were who had unbelieving husbands. *They* had been converted to Christianity whilst *their husbands* remained unconverted. They might, then, be disposed to leave them, and even to seek a divorce, whence the Apostle says, very delicately, "Be in subjection to your *own* husbands," and be not tempted to forsake them, for the marriage bond is inviolable; and "Let not the wife depart from her husband" is the solemn command of the Lord (1 Cor. vii. 10). Ah, there is a poor wife who is tied to a husband who is worse than a heathen—a drunkard, a blasphemer, a spendthrift; and he abuses her, and beats her, and sometimes turns her out of doors. It is hard work for her to put up with such treatment, and she is ready to leave him and to seek refuge where she can. I do not say that there are no instances in which she ought to do it, but I do say to her, "remain if possible, and cast your burden on the Lord;" for such a wife does not know but that she may gain her husband. Let her conversation, her behaviour, be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ, and her husband may, says the Apostle, be won over to the truth, and that without a word,[1]—that is, without preaching to or exhorting him, or by the power of example only.

St. Augustine tells us that his mother, Monica, bore much violence from her husband for many years, but gained him to Christ at the close of his life, by her

[1] ἄνευ λογου.

feminine virtues, and her gentle ways. And what a conquest! A soul converted is gained to itself, but it is gained also by the instrument of its conversion, and when a wife thus gains her husband she gains a reward which is greater than thousands of gold and silver.

And the conversation, or deportment,[1] of a Christian wife, united with chaste or holy fear of God—for such is the Apostle's meaning—will often attract the attention of an unconverted husband. He will *behold* it, will consider it attentively, and will at length be led to see its excellence, and will seek the religion by which it is inspired. Submit, then, ye Christian wives, and pray meanwhile that your husbands, if unsaved, may be brought in penitence to the feet of Christ.

2. To their apparel. "Your adornment," says the Apostle, "let it not be the (outward) adornment of plaiting the hair, of wearing golden ornaments, and of putting on of dresses." Such was the way in which worldly-minded women sought to attract and please their husbands; they braided their hair in new styles and fashions, they put round[2] their heads, as diadems—or on their arms, as bracelets—or on their legs, as anklets—or on their fingers, as rings—golden ornaments; and they clothed themselves with beautiful and costly dresses

[1] *Lit:* Behaviour—ἀναστροφῇ. The same word as in verse 1 and 2.

[1] The word περιθέσις means "putting round." It is only used here in the N. Test.

made of silk or other textures, and that in the most unbecoming and indecent manner. The prophet Isaiah refers to these customs, and tells the women of Jerusalem how the Lord would take away their numerous ornaments, and put a brand upon them instead of their prided beauty (ch. iii. 18, 24), and, in St. Peter's days, Jewish females were still vain of their attire, and fond of ear-rings, and nose-rings, and finger-rings, and many other such trifles.

What shall we say of the adornments of many females in our own day—I will not say in the fashionable world, for there we can expect nothing better, but even in the Christian world? How many Christian wives and daughters are there who spend far more money in dress than they give to the cause of Christ, and far more time at the mirror than in reading the Word of God and in prayer? I do not say that a woman's dress should be tawdry, mean, and unbecoming. She should dress according to her station in life; and even the use of golden ornaments and of flowers I would not in every case condemn. Peter does not here forbid every adornment of the body; for a seemly adorning of it is allowed. Rather does he advert to the costliness of dress, and to the manner and the spirit in which it is put on. Let not your adornment consist in what is outward; do not think about your apparel, and pride yourselves upon it; be not anxious to attract the attention, and to win the admiration of your husbands by your external appearance. And specially he would say, "Do not paint

your eyebrows, or put rouge upon your cheeks." Men there are who are pleased with such things, but there is another kind of adornment which, if they are men of sense, will please them far more, namely, the hidden man of the heart, the new nature formed within the soul by the Holy Spirit of God, the incorruptible ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price.

Is dress, however beautiful and costly, to be compared, for a moment, with high mental and spiritual acquirements? What man of sense would not prefer the society of a woman endowed with natural or acquired powers, and especially with a meek and quiet spirit, however plain her person and her dress, to that of a gay and thoughtless flirt, decked with pearls and precious stones? Depend upon it, young man, that the dashing lady of the ball-room, whom perhaps you sometimes admire, is not the lady who would make you the best wife. Her outward beauty will soon fade, and if there is nothing behind it, what then? O give me, in either sex, beauty of mind, an amiable disposition, a gentle spirit, and a loving heart, the fruit of regenerating grace, maturing with the lapse of years! *That* is the beauty of the Lord, and in His sight it is of great price. God looks not upon the outer, but upon the inner man; and, to please Him, we must put on the Lord Jesus Christ, making no provision for the lusts of the flesh, nor for the lust of the eye, nor the pride of life.

3. To their imitation of others. In this manner, with a

to knowledge, as with the weaker vessel. Both are vessels—clay in the hands of the potter, who has formed them for Himself, giving to each the frame best suited for the end He has in view (Jer. xviii. 6; Isa. xxix. 16, etc.); but the wife is physically the weaker vessel, and the husband, knowing this, is to treat her, in every respect, with kind consideration. She is subject to many trials as a mother, to many cares as the mistress of the household, to many diseases peculiar to her sex. Shall all this be forgotten? and shall the often suffering and sorrowful wife have no sympathy, or very little, from him to whom she has a right to look up? God forbid. And yet how often is it so! The treatment of Christian wives in our own day, even by professedly Christian husbands is, many cases, such as we are ashamed to speak of. That unconverted men should be faithless to their wives, and treat them wrongfully, is not a matter of much surprise, but that men professing godliness should be so thoughtless of them as they often are, is dishonourable to the name they bear.

It is a mistake to suppose that by "the weaker vessel" here, it is meant that the wife is always mentally the inferior of the husband. In many qualities of the mind she often far excels him, and there have been, and still are, women whose acquirements in all branches of science and art equalled those of the most eminent men. The society of many a wife is better, in an intellectual point of view, than her husband will meet with away from home; and, as

for spiritual conversation and Christian fellowship, hers is often not to be surpassed. Avail yourselves, then, ye husbands, of your wives' society as much as you can. Many of you are necessarily absent in your business during the greater part of the day. Do not, then, spend the evening also in the company of others, as if you thought it better than that of your wife and children, but give to them whatever time you can afford, and let your domestic enjoyments be esteemed the sweetest of your life.

2. Honour. Your wives, says the Apostle, are fellow-heirs with you of the grace of life. It is here assumed that both are believers; and, if so, both are partakers of the gift of life flowing from the grace of God. Eternal life begins on earth, and is consummated in heaven, so that two things are here implied—that the husband and the wife are one in Christ now, and that hereafter their union will continue in a brighter and a happier sphere.

They are one in Christ now. He redeemed them *both* by His precious blood; He dwells in them both by His Holy Spirit; He implants in them both the life of faith and love. O blessed fellowship! And shall they be afraid to converse with one another on the things of God? Shall they have any secrets in reference either to their outer or their inner life? The union that subsists between them is so close and sacred that, as far as possible, their very thoughts should blend; and if any differences of opinion exist either with regard to their family affairs, or in respect

to religious views, they should try to remove them as soon as possible, or should bear with one another in reference to them with all charity and love. Specially should they *honour* one another; and the husband who has a Christian wife should never for one moment fail to see in her one who, equally with himself, bears the signature and stamp of heaven.

They will be re-united hereafter. The closest bonds we form on earth are severed by the hand of death; and the day will come when your wife will be taken from you, or you from her; and one of you will sit by the corpse of the other, and think, perhaps, of the history of your married life. But even then religion will be your solace and your stay. How different the emotions of the believer when called to part with one he truly loves, from those of a sceptic or an infidel! He knows that the separation will be brief, and that, fellow-heirs of life, he and his loved one will meet again in the realms of immortality and bliss. In heaven they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God; yet, from the Apostle's language here, we should certainly infer the recognition of our friends in heaven, and even a re-union with them in bonds to be severed not again. Honour then your wife. She will one day, like yourself, be as an angel of God. You will tread together the bowers of Paradise; you will drink together of the water of life; you will chant together the song of victory; you will dwell together in the unclouded presence of your Lord.

3. The Apostle adds as a special reason for all this: "that your prayers be not hindered." He assumes that the husband and the wife do pray; that they pray not merely *for* one another, but *with* one another; not merely at the domestic altar, but together, when no one else is near. Such at least is their duty, and such their high and sacred privilege. Prayer is the very centre and support of conjugal life; and praying together, as often as circumstances permit, will tend to sanctify the union, and, perhaps, to prolong it for many years. It is said of Philip Henry that he and his wife constantly prayed together morning and evening, and from his own experience of the benefit of the practice he recommended it to all his Christian friends.

But if the husband is inconsiderate of his wife's less vigorous frame, and fails to honour her as a fellow-heir of heaven, where or what will be their prayers? They will scarcely be offered at all, or, if they are, they will fail of their design. Hindered prayer. How solemn is the thought! How suggestive the expression! Ah! there are thousands of such prayers in all places—prayers that attempt to rise, but are hindered by their coldness, and indifference, and unbelief. The united prayers of the husband and the wife should pierce the skies, and bring down blessings on themselves and on their children; but if they are not one in mind and heart, their devotions will languish, and their petitions necessarily fail. Can prayers reach heaven from

the lips of persons who have been speaking to one another in unkind words? Will prayers be of any avail if there is any rancour in your breast, or a particle of animosity in your minds? What! Can you quarrel, and then pray? or treat each other coldly, and then pray? or vex one another heedlessly, and then pray? It is quite impossible; and, that your prayers be not hindered, love one another with a pure heart fervently with that love which is essential to the happiness of married life.

And if your prayers be not hindered, who can estimate their efficacy and power? Presented in the name of your Representative and High Priest, they will rise up before the throne as holy incense, and then their fragrance will return upon you, and will fill, not only the chamber in which you kneel, but every room of the house in which you dwell, whilst it will surround your persons, and you will carry it with you into all the circles in which you move.

THOUGHTS OF OTHER MINDS.

Ver. 4. The hidden man of the heart. This is apparel for all sexes, ages, degrees, and callings whatsoever, and which doth well become and fit each of them; neither are great ones to despise it for that mean ones wear it, for this doth not derogate from its worth, only they that are God's people wearing it. This is never out of season, as serving both for summer and winter; never out of fashion. It fits in youth, in age, in life, in death, and is to be worn as well by night as by day, in sickness as in health; yea, is then in great account, when other apparel is laid aside, and not regarded. Yea, this apparel we carry with us

out of this world, when we leave our gay robes behind us; and this apparel lasts for ever, being the better for the wearing.—ROGERS.

Ver. 4. This ornament, and the whole class it belongs to, is "in the sight of God of great price." One of the reasons why many females are so fond of fine clothes and rich ornaments is, that these are admired by others. But by whom are they admired? By men; and most admired by the least wise and worthy of the species,—men whose opinion is little worth. But this ornament of the hidden man of the heart is "in the sight of God of great price." He who alone has wisdom admires it. Yes, "He looks to, He dwells with, the meek, the humble, the lowly in heart." And His approbation is of more value than that of all the other beings of the universe. "Not she who commendeth herself, not she whom men commend, is approved, but she whom God commendeth."—DR. JOHN BROWN.

Ver. 7. Let the husband "honour the wife as a weaker vessel," that is, use her tenderly. China dishes and Venice glasses must be tenderly handled, because they are weak vessels. The husband must, with a mantle of love, cover many infirmities. A heathen could tell Sarah that "Abraham was a covering of the eyes to her" (Gen. xx. 16). The eye is the tenderest part of the body. God hath provided a special cover to fence it. When God would speak His infinite respect to, and care of, His people, He saith, "They are as dear to Him as the apple of His eye." Truly, husbands ought to be as tender of their wives as the apple of their eyes.—SWINNOCK.

Ver. 7. Those married pairs that live as remembering that they must part again, and give account how they treat themselves and each other, shall, at the day of their death, be admitted to glorious espousals; and when they shall live again, be married to their Lord, and partake of His glories with Abraham and Joseph, St. Peter and St. Paul, and all the married saints.—BISHOP JEREMY TAYLOR.

Ver. 7. Those persons live contrary to the nature of this relation who live a great part of their lives asunder, as many do, for worldly respects; when they have several houses, possessions, or trades, and the husband must live at one and the wife at the other, for their commodity sake, and only come together once in a week, or in many weeks. When this is done without great necessity it is a constant violation of their duties. —R. BAXTER.

Ver. 7. Now the breach of conjugal love, the jars and contentions of husband and wife, do, out of doubt, so embitter their spirits, that they are exceedingly unfit for prayer, which is the sweet harmony of the soul in God's ears; and when the soul is so far out of tune as those distempers make it, He cannot but perceive it whose ear is the most exact of all, for He made and tuned the ear, and is the fountain of harmony. It cuts the sinews and strength of prayer, makes breaches and gaps, as wounds at which the spirits fly out. When the soul is calm and composed it may behold the face of God shining on it. And those who pray together should not only have hearts in tune within themselves, in their own frame, but tuned together; especially husband and wife, who are one, they should have hearts consorted and sweetly tuned to each other for prayer.—LEIGHTON.

XIII.

CHRISTIAN ONENESS.

"But finally, all being of one mind, sympathising, brotherly-loving, compassionate, humble-minded; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but on the contrary blessing; knowing that to this ye were called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that desires to love life, and to see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; let him turn away from evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are (open) unto their prayers; but the fear of the Lord is upon them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if you be emulous of that which is good? But even if ye suffer for righteousness' sake happy are ye, and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled, but sanctify the Lord Christ in your hearts: Being ready always for an answer to anyone that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, but with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that in that in which ye are spoken against, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good behaviour in Christ, for it is better if the will of God so will that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing"—(Chap. iii., v. 8-17).

It is scarcely possible to express by a single title all that is included in the verses now before us. They contain a string of exhortations, and of arguments by which the exhortations are enforced, blended together without logical order. And yet they all hang upon this word—*oneness;* for where that does not exist Christians are a scattered people, exposed to the assaults of numerous foes, and subject to endless fears and doubts.

The Apostle says "finally," here, as if he were about to

conclude his Epistle; yet he goes on somewhat further, for he is moved to do so by the Holy Spirit under whose plenary influence he writes. We find in this paragraph—

I. NOTES OF INSTRUCTION. "Finally, being all of one mind" (ver. 8).

1. Oneness of mind is the key-note here; but what is meant by it? St. Paul furnishes an answer when he says, "Be of the same mind one toward another" (Rom. xii. 16); but this carries us back to our Lord's sacerdotal prayer—"That they all may be one" (John xvii. 21). His desire was that His followers should be one in judgment, one in affection, and one in purpose and aim; and if His prayer were accomplished the world would believe that the Father had sent Him, and men of every rank in society would be disposed to seek in the Church a sacred haven from all the storms and tempests of time. Will it ever be? Yes; and meanwhile, if it is not so as yet, we should ever aim to promote it. How are we to do this? (1) By having compassion one of another, or sympathising in one another's weal or woe,—weeping with those who weep, and rejoicing with those who rejoice. (2) By loving one another, as brethren in Christ,[1] truly and fervently, as already the Apostle has so clearly taught (ch. xi. 17). (3) By being pitiful, literally of strong bowels, like our Father in heaven whose bowels yearn with tenderness towards His children, erring and wayward though they are. And (4) by being

[1] The word is φιλαδέλφοι, *lit.* brotherly loving, or loving as brethren.

courteous, humble-minded towards everyone, and kind in thought and deed. This courteousness implies a sweet and gentle disposition, which displays itself not in outward acts and formal manners, such as the fashionable world calls courteousness—the politenesss and civility that courtiers practise—but in genuine regard to all around us, deeming every man worthy of respect and honour, however humble his station in life. The courteous man is affable, friendly-minded, always trying to please others; and such a man will attract even those who are otherwise, as sweet music attracts the ear, or lovely flowers the eye. Courteousness is a magnet which draws all men to itself, and binds them together like a three-fold cord. Some men possess it naturally, or by their training and education, whilst others are rough and uncouth in manner, and it is difficnlt for them to speak in gentle tones. But Christianity can polish the most unshapely diamond, and it almost invariably makes even the country peasant a true gentleman, however lowly his position, or however poor his garb.

2. Blessing opponents is closely connected with it. "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing." The Christian may often receive evil from others, but he cannot consistently give it back to them. He may often be reproached —as the word here means—but he cannot reproach again. "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" is often the demand of worldly men; but "I say unto you," was the anguage of our Lord, "resist not evil." And again, "I

say unto you, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you" (Matt. v. 39, etc.; Luke vi. 27-29). This is the morality of the New Testament—a morality which heathenism never taught, and which Peter himself, though not a heathen, only learnt of his Lord, who said to him, "Put up thy sword into its sheath."

But this is negative only; there must be its very opposite—"contrariwise blessing," that is, praying for a blessing on your greatest foes, "knowing that hereunto ye are called that ye yourselves may inherit a blessing." Christ calls His people to forgive, that they may be forgiven; to bless, that they may themselves be blest; to deal mercifully with those who oppose them, that God may deal mercifully with them (cf. Prov. xxv. 21, 22; Rom. xii. 20). How blessed a thing it is to revenge an injury by forgetting it, and by heaping coals of fire upon its author's head.

> The sandal tree perfumes, when riven,
> The axe that laid it low:
> Let him that hopes to be forgiven
> Forgive and bless his foe.

He who does this will inherit a blessing now, even that of a mind conscious of victory over its evil dispositions; and he will inherit a blessing in the great day, when he will become the possessor of a heavenly home, in which it is said there shall be no more curse.

Refraining the tongue and eschewing evil are implied in the above, and are enforced by a quotation from Psalm xxxiv. 12-15. The Apostle cites from the Septuagint, but with a slight variation. The passage has been rendered thus: "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?" and then, as if the question were asked, *Is it you?* the answer is, "Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil." The Psalmist speaks of the desire of a long life, which is more or less natural to all men, but with the hope that they may see good; and the Apostle follows him, but with a reference also to the future life, and the good that will be connected with it. Who possesses that desire? The way to make life really good is to bridle the tongue, and to refrain from uttering falsehoods or lies; for how can *he* expect to see good, and to spend a long and pleasant life, who permits that unruly member, as St. James called it, to have full licence—the seat, as it is, of deadly poison? Such a man will bring down upon himself the scorn and hatred of mankind, whilst the man who utters only words of truthfulness and love will win the confidence of all around him. If, then, you would live a peaceful life, and would be happy amid the smiles and the approval of your fellow men, eschew evil of every kind, turn from it

as from the most loathsome object, for it is a serpent whose brood is deadly, fascinating as it may often seem. But more—do good; seek peace, and if it seems to elude your search—for it cannot always be found—pursue it, run after it, as a treasure of the highest worth.

These are the conditions of prosperity; for the eyes of the Lord are upon, or over, the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry, or prayers. How precious is this fact! If no one else regards the righteous man, the Lord Jehovah does. His eyes, which slumber not nor sleep, watch him night and day; and into His ears he may pour out his complaints, with the certainty of being heard in due time. On the other hand, the face of the Lord is against[1] them that do evil. It is directed towards them, but in wrath. It looks upon them, but with deep displeasure. It is fixed upon them, but with an aspect they would tremble to behold. Sin, then, is not a trifle, as some regard it; nor a mere misfortune, as many deem it. It is an exceeding sinful thing, which is hateful in the sight of God, and which renders hateful in His sight all who fall into its snares. "Do not," he says, "the abominable thing that I hate."

II. NOTES OF ENCOURAGEMENT follow (ver. 13-15): 1. None can injure you. Seeing that God takes such care of the righteous, the Apostle asks, as in a triumphant tone, Who will be permitted to harm you, if of that which is

[1] The same word—ἐπί—is again used here, but the antithesis implies that in this case it means *against*.

good ye are emulous?[1] Such is the order, and such the significance of his words. Everything depends upon your being zealous of good in every form and of every kind, or, if we take our own version, of your being *followers* or *imitators* of the good, first as personified in Christ, and next as manifested in His true disciples. Who, then, can injure you? You may be maligned by the world, tempted by Satan, assaulted by all the powers of hell; but the good you seek will be your refuge and defence, and, hiding yourselves in the munition of rocks, you shall laugh at danger, and defy your foes. There is probably a reference here to Prov. xvi. 7, "When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Not unfrequently are those who were disposed to harm believers turned into their warmest friends; but still more frequently their power is broken, so that they see it is of no avail to attempt to injure a child of God. "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm," says the Lord Jehovah; and he that toucheth them toucheth the apple of His eye (1 Chron. xvi. 22; Zech. ii. 8). Who is he that will harm you? A secret foe? God's eye is upon him. An open adversary? God's arm prevents him. Satan, or one of his mighty emissaries? God says to him, as to the proud waves of the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further." Be encouraged, then, O believer! for "if God be for us, who then can be against us" (Rom viii. 31).

[1] The usual reading is *μιμηταὶ*—followers or imitators; but many editors read *ζηλωταὶ*—jealous or emulous. *See* Alford, Fronmüller, etc.

at all, nor teach in the name of the Lord Jesus, they answered, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye; for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." And when they had further threatened them they let them go (Acts iv. 20, 21).

"Be not terrified, then, by their terror," says the Apostle; "nay, rather sanctify in your hearts the Lord Christ, making them His temples in which he may abide for ever." "Let Him—Jehovah—be your fear," is added by the prophet, and the inference from the quotation is that Christ is Jehovah, whom, if we fear, we need fear none else. Christian heroism is not natural fearlessness, but a holy principle fixed in the heart by the presence there of Jesus as our Head and Lord. When He is in us as the hope of glory, He is in us also as the conqueror of all our fears. He is the Lord of Hosts, of the holy angels, of the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, and He musters them for the conflict in which His people are engaged, and leads them on to sure, certain, and glorious victory,

III. NOTES OF CONFIDENCE are uttered by the Apostle (ver. 15, 17). Such certainly we may call these words. They speak of the Christian's hope, of which he never need be ashamed; and they remind him again that, having a good conscience, he may be calm and restful even when assailed by evildoers.

1. The Christian's hope; what is it? It is the centre of

his spiritual life. It dwells in his inmost heart. It springs out of his faith in Jesus as the Christ of God. It is the fruit of regenerating grace; and has for its objects the resurrection of the dead, and the incorruptible inheritance reserved for him in heaven (Acts xxiii. 6; 1 Pet. i. 4-6). But it includes also immediate blessedness after death, and thus it sheds a halo over the Christian's last hours, and enables him to rejoice in the prospect of dissolution. It robs the last enemy of his sting, the grave of its terrors, and the future of its uncertainty and gloom (Phil. i. 21-23; 1 John iii. 1, 2). The hope which some men entertain on these great subjects is like a loose garment which is easily removed; or like a baseless edifice, which soon tumbles to the ground. But the believer's hope rests upon a rock, and is *in him* as an essential part of his spiritual existence.

2. What is his privilege and duty in respect to it? To be ready always to give a reason for it, to everyone that asks him, with meekness and fear. The word is literally *an apology*,[1] but that word is now used in the sense of *an excuse;* so that the rendering of our version is correct—*a reason;* and *that* everyone should be able to give for his hope readily, and whenever he is asked for it. Not that we are bound, as Christians, to answer any scoffer that may assail our faith; but if anyone comes to us, and asks us on what we are resting our hope, what ground we have for it,

[1] *απολογία.* The word means also a plea or defence. Acts xxii. 1; 2 Tim. iv. 16.

or how we can defend it, we should be prepared to give a reply; yet, as Luther says, "not with proud words or with violence, but with such fear and humility as if we stood before the judgment-seat of God."

But can an unlettered Christian be expected to do this, especially in such times as these, when the Christian faith is assailed at every point, in the most subtle manner and with the greatest skill? Yes; for though he may not be able to answer all the objections of the sceptic, yet, inasmuch as his hope is a matter of experience, he can easily give such reasons for it as a candid mind would accept. And how many, who have been perfectly ignorant of the learning of the schools, and perfectly unacquainted with the arts of disputation, have been able, in a few words, to put to silence those who have called their hope in question! But only those can do this who have a good conscience—a conscience void of offence before God and before man. He who keeps a good conscience is in possession of a good hope, and can defend that hope with good reasons which the world around him will not be able to gainsay. Of our hope we need never be ashamed, for we have answers for it ready—not far to seek—and if those who question us about it are not satisfied with them, we can maintain it still, assured that it will not fail us when we are anticipating its fruition.

But there are times when silence is our best answer, and when it will have greater weight than all the assertions we can make, and all the arguments we can use.

3. With what design should the answer be given? "That," says the Apostle, "in the matter in which ye are spoken against as evildoers, they who traduce your good conversation in Christ may be ashamed" (ver. 16). The early Christians were spoken against in matters innumerable, as if they were the worst people in the world, and their whole behaviour was traduced, though it was the noblest the world had ever seen. But many of them acted on the advice here given, and, by the manner in which they maintained their hope, they often made their enemies ashamed. Nothing puts an enemy to silence so soon as a calm and dignified demeanour on the part of the accused. If you are angry when you are assailed, your assailant will take the advantage, and return with greater violence to the charge; if you are quiet and unmoved he will cease to molest you, and perhaps ere long acknowledge that you are in the right. Answer, then, in this spirit; not for the sake of your reputation as a man as for the sake of your profession as a Christian. It is not of much importance what the world may think or say of us; but it is of importance that it should see nothing in us unworthy of our Christian character.

4. For what is our consolation in the midst of all this? "That it is better to suffer for doing well, if the will of God should will it so, than for doing evil." Often is the Christian disposed to say, "I could have borne it if I had deserved it." Yes; but if you had deserved it, what then?

And, therefore, a man of a good conscience will endure any grief and suffer any wrong to keep his conscience good towards God. Such a good conscience had Daniel (Dan. i. 8). "He purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat;" that is, he was fully settled and resolved in his conscience that, come what would, he would not do that which would not stand with a good conscience. But what if he could have had no other meat? Without doubt he would rather have starved than have defiled his conscience with that meat. He would have lost his life rather than have lost the peace and integrity of his conscience. It seems a question of great difficulty which was put to the three children (Dan. iii.), Whether they will give the bowing of their bodies to the golden idol, or the burning of their bodies to the fiery furnace. But yet they find no such difficulty therein, they were not careful to answer in that matter (ver. 16). Of the two fires they chose the coolest and the easiest. The fire of a guilty conscience is seven times hotter and more intolerable than the fire of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, though it be heated seven times more that it was wont to be heated.—JER. DYKE, 1631.

XIV.

THE SPIRITS IN PRISON.

"Because Christ also suffered for sins once; the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which He also went and preached to the spirits in prison, which were once disobedient, when the long-suffering of God was waiting in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing in which few —that is, eight—souls were saved by water; which, the antitype, even baptism, doth now also save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the inquiry of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him"—(*Chap.* iii. 18-22).

It is better to suffer for well-doing, and is the true path to blessedness and God, "Because," says the Apostle, "Christ also suffered for sins." This thought he had previously introduced (ch. ii. 21), but there his design was to present Christ as our example; here it is to prove the advantage of suffering, from which, for the most part, we naturally shrink.

But, then, the Apostle enlarges on the subject and exhibits it in an aspect somewhat new. Few passages in the New Testament have given rise to more controversy than this, and few have met with such a variety of interpretations. I shall endeavour to unfold to you the result of a careful study of those remarkable words which set before us—

I. THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST (ver. 18): 1. He suffered

once. The word is doubtless emphatic, but it is not used here as in Heb. x. 1, as contrasting Christ's sufferings with the frequent offerings of the Mosaic ritual. It points rather to the fact that His sufferings are over and have passed away. He suffers no more, agonises no more, dies no more. When He cried, on the cross, "It is finished," it was the victor's shout, and told the universe that His last pang had been endured, and that there remained for Him eternal repose in the bosom of His Father. Thus a beam of comforting light falls on the sufferings of Christians. They too are for once—during a brief lifetime, and will soon be over; and then will come rest, enjoyment, heaven, and immortality. Our afflictions are light and but for a moment (2 Cor. iv. 17); and even if, in some cases, they are protracted through an entire period of threescore years and ten, yet, in comparison with eternity, this is but a little while.

2. He suffered for sin. Himself the Sinless One, He took our place, and, on account of our sins, endured shame, and obloquy, and reproach—the bitter agony and the cruel death. Perfectly innocent as Jesus was, He ought, in the nature of things, to have been exempt from suffering; but, instead of this, He was the greatest of all sufferers, and that because the sins of the whole world were laid on Him, and He was made answerable for human guilt. This is the great doctrine of the atonement as taught in the New Testament. St. Paul often dwells upon it, as for example in the memo-

rable words "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21). And St. Peter is here equally express. Christ was the great sin-offering for mankind. On the altar of the cross He Himself, as the High Priest of our profession, presented His spotless body as a sacrifice for sin, and thereby made the atonement once for all, on behalf of the fallen human race. Our sufferings are in no way propitiatory or sacrificial in the sense in which His were such; but can we wonder if God wills that we should suffer, when He willed that His beloved Son should be made a sin-offering? Here is another beam of light on the sufferings of believers; they are endured for His sake, and in fellowship with Him; and thus, far from being a cause of shame and grief, they are our glory and our joy (Phil. iii. 8-11).

3. He suffered vicariously—"the just one for the unjust race," or "a just person for unjust persons, that He might bring us to God." A different particle is here used, ὑπερ, which undoubtedly bears the meaning of substitution, and signifies not merely "on our account," but in our room and stead. He was the just person—"The Holy One and the just" (Acts iii. 14), and, therefore, the law had no demands on Him, and personally He might have claimed of the Father eternal life, without passing through the gate of death. But the human race were unjust. Not one of them could be found who had not violated the

Divine law and rendered himself subject to its fearful penalties. Jews and Gentiles were alike under sin. "There is none," said the Scripture, "that doeth righteousness, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God" (Ps. xiv. 2, 3; Rom. iii. 10-18). What a picture have we here! The Psalmist represents God as looking down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did good—if there was a single just person among them, and He could not find one. The name *sinner* was on every brow, and every man, therefore, was under the curse of the law. What, then, was to be done? Must God lose the creatures He had made? must they wander from Him without any possibility of their being brought back? This was not His will; yet how could they come near to Him and be re-accepted into His favour unless some just one should seek them and bring them home? In His beloved Son He found one who could do this. That Son voluntarily undertook to become one of them—a man, a partaker of flesh and blood, and as a man to be obedient to His Father's will—obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. O wondrous love! He suffered for us—suffered the penalty He did not Himself deserve—that, taking us by the hand sprinkled with His precious blood, and thereby cleansed and sanctified, He might lead us to the Father, and say, Here are Thy sheep which were lost. Can we estimate the debt of gratitude we owe to Christ for this wondrous act of redeeming love?

A wealthy gentleman once bought a poor negro in a slave market for a sum of money which he had intended to lay out in buying a piece of land; he then said to him, "Now you are free." "What!" said the negro, "may I go wherever I will?" "Yes," was the reply. "Then let me be your slave, massa; for you have redeemed me and I owe all to you." The gentleman took him as his servant, and a better one he never had. Has Christ purchased us? redeemed us? offered us our liberty? He did it at the sacrifice of Himself. Let us be His willing servants for ever.

But I must add another thought here. Our Lord was the just one, and was such to the end. Some have spoken of Him as, by imputation, a sinner, the greatest of all sinners; but this He could not be, and to represent Him as *punished* for our sins as if personally guilty of them, is a misconception which has led some to reject the atonement altogether. His sufferings were substitutionary, but even when bearing our sins in His own body on the tree He was the Holy One of God, the beloved of the Father; for in the midst of His extremest agony He could say "My God, my God!" and presently the light burst again upon His spirit, and He died the conqueror of death. Sin involved mankind in a penalty of suffering; He bore that penalty, though in another form, and now all who accept Him as their atonement are delivered both from the penalty and the power of sin.

4. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit. This clause has been variously understood; but the meaning is, "indeed in the flesh He was put to death," that is, as to His outward or sensuous nature, He died upon the cross. That flesh was holy flesh, but it was sensitive too—O how sensitive!—and it suffered, quivering in every limb and nerve, so that He said, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels" (Ps. xxii. 14). What terrible suffering of the flesh must the scourging have been which was inflicted by the Roman soldiers! "The plowers plowed upon his back; they made long their furrows" (Ps. cxxix. 3). No wonder that he afterwards fainted under the weight of His cross, and that another had to bear it for Him. And what anguish of the flesh must the nails that were driven into His hands and feet have caused! Yet all this He bore with patience, and for the sake of a guilty world.

But *in* His spirit He was quickened or brought again to life. His spirit never died; but, as to it, He was made alive again, that spirit re-entering the body on the morning of the third day, ere it saw corruption, and thus giving it the victory over death and the grave. He has a body now, but it is a spiritual, and not a fleshly one; and that body has passed into a state of inconceivable glory, such as, in His Divine nature, He had with the Father before the world began (John xvii. 5). Yes; the human

spirit, and the glorified body of our Lord, are conjoined for ever with the Divine nature, and, as the God-man, He is enthroned above the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.

II. THE EFFECT OF THESE SUFFERINGS ON THE UNSEEN WORLD (ver. 19, 20). These words are not easy to understand, and hence the variety of interpretations they have received is quite extraordinary. To some of them I shall advert as I proceed; but I will give you the results at which I have arrived after a careful consideration of the questions involved.

1. Let us inquire who are meant by the spirits in prison. The word rendered prison—φυλακή—always means a place of custody or confinement; and the word rendered spirits, means disembodied spirits. These are said to have been the "disobedient," who before the flood resisted the grace of God, and for one hundred and twenty years, during which the ark was being built in which Noah and his family—eight persons in all—were saved, rejected the warnings that were given them until the flood actually came and swept them all away. The condition of the world at that time was such, that it is said "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth; and that every imagination of the thought of his heart was only evil continually." He resolved, therefore, that "His Spirit should not always strive with man; yet He would grant him a further respite of a hundred and twenty years"

(Gen. vi. 2-7). A deluge should destroy them, but not just yet; and Noah was to build an ark for the saving of his house. He began the work, employing many of the thoughtless and impenitent in its construction. But they only laughed at him, and did not believe that any such judgment would ever take place. The human family was not then large, as some have supposed, nor was it scattered over the whole earth, but confined to a certain region of the east; otherwise Noah's preaching could have been of little use. The judgment came, and they were hurried into the unseen world. That unseen world was Hades, or the place of departed spirits, and the prison in which these antediluvians were confined was some particular part of it; and there they had been shut up for a period of two thousand years. It was, probably, a dreary region; but it was not hell, and it would seem that their final doom was not fixed. Many of them, doubtless, when they saw the flood coming, and when it rose higher and yet higher, so that they found no way of escape, cried to God and repented of their transgressions; but it was too late, and they must now pass into another state of being, there to await the judgment of the Most High.

But were they the only spirits in this prison? Had not many thousands entered it in the following ages? And may we not therefore suppose that Peter, in speaking of the judgments of the past, took these, as did our Lord, as representative instances of countless multitudes? "The

spirits of whom He thought," to use the language of another, "were those who had been unbelieving, disobedient, corrupt, ungodly; but who yet had not hardened themselves in the one irremediable antagonism to good which has never forgiveness." It has been supposed by many that the final doom of every man is fixed at death, and in proof of the dogma the words have been quoted, "In the place where the tree falleth there it shall be" (Eccles. xi. 3); but this was not the doctrine of the early church, nor do those words mean anything of the kind. I doubt not that for those who have had the full light of conscience or of revelation, and have persistently rejected it, and that for those who deliberately refused to accept Jesus as their Saviour, there is no repentance in the grave, no repentance in the separate state; but there are thousands upon thousands of the human family who have been born and brought up in the midst of heathenism theoretical and practical, and who have scarcely had a chance of turning away from the paths of the transgressor,—can we suppose that all these have been consigned to hopeless and irremediable woe? This is a question which has often wrung my soul with agony; and doubtless there are many upon whose spirits it has pressed as an intolerable load. Does the passage now before us shed any light on this great mystery? Let us proceed, and further inquire:

2. In what way did Christ preach to these spirits? A very common interpretation of the text is that He preached

to them by His spirit through Noah; and our rendering of the passage seems to favour this view. But it is certainly not the correct one, for the words are not *by which* but *in which*—ἐν ᾧ—and the reference is to the disembodied spirit of our Lord, which, between His death and His resurrection, descended into "the lower parts of the earth"—that is, into Hades, the abode of departed spirits, that, as the Apostle Paul declares, "He might fill all things," or "all places" (Ephes. iv. 9, 10). We have here, then, the doctrine of the Creed—"He descended into hell," which doctrine has been variously explained; some supposing hell means the place of suffering, and that Christ entered it and there suffered the torments of the damned; whilst others, who are doubtless right, represent it as Sheol, or Hades, both names signifying the abode of separate spirits, which, by the Jews, was described as consisting of Paradise, the residence of the sainted dead, and Gehenna, the prison of the lost. It was spoken of as being "under the earth," and some have supposed that it is in the very centre of the earth itself; but space is wide enough for many states of being, and we may well conceive that there may have been, and are, vast regions within it occupied by different classes of persons in different conditions of joy or pain. Into these regions the disembodied spirit of our Lord passed, but not to suffer, for on the cross He declared "It is finished;" and to the robber by His side He said, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Accordingly, St. Peter explained

the words of Psalm xvi. 8-11 as referring to Christ, who said, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." And the prophecy was fulfilled, for His soul or spirit returned from Hades, and re-entered the body ere corruption could touch it with its withering hand (Acts ii. 25-31).

Christ, then, went and preached to the inhabitants of the realm of the dead in His disembodied spirit. But in what did His preaching consist? In proclaiming, say some, His glorious victory over sin and death, and in testifying to the righteous dead that He had obtained for them a title to the bliss of heaven. But, surely, more than this is meant, for He preached not to the righteous only, but to the spirits *in prison*, some of whom, at least, are said to have been the disobedient inhabitants of the world before the flood. And the word here used invariably signifies to preach the Gospel,[1] to proclaim the glad tidings; and the meaning, therefore, must be that Christ went to tell those sinners that He had died for them, and that through Him they might yet be delivered from their gloomy prison. Their doom was not yet fixed, and now their prison doors were thrown wide open, and they might leave it for a state of blessedness if they would.

[1] The word κηρύσσω is never used of judicial preaching, and is often joined with "the Gospel," as in Matt. iv. 23, ix. 35. Where it is found alone, it is understood that the chief burden of Christ's preaching was: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come nigh."—*Frommüller.* "The descent of Christ into Hades was accompanied by a proclamation of His Gospel. Exegesis requires this."—*Dr. W. B. Pope.*

3. With what result did Christ thus preach? On this point nothing is said; but we may naturally infer that many of these spirits in prison gathered round Him, and listened to the wondrous news. They had been waiting for it long, not without hope, and now at length it came; and whatever their state of mind had been, they were now filled with gladness, and joyfully availed themselves of the proffered boon. He, therefore, liberated them, and set them free; and, together with the righteous dead, bore them in triumph to a higher state—to Paradise, the vestibule of heaven. "With Christ," says one, "a new morning dawned upon the realm of the dead;" and I cannot but entertain a hope that vast multitudes of the heathen who had died without the light of revelation were then made acquainted with the great plan of salvation, and accepted it with joy and praise. But is not this the Romish doctrine of Purgatory? No; that doctrine is very different. It teaches that the spirits of the departed are purified by fire; and that indulgences, as they are called, which the Church alone can dispense, can shorten the period of suffering, or, if plenary, altogether prevent it. There is nothing here analogous to such a dogma.

Nor does this explanation of the Apostle's words touch the question of the eternity of future punishment in the case of those who, whilst on earth, have wilfully and deliberately rejected Christ. Their probation is at an end. For them nothing remains but "a fearful looking for of

judgment and of fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb. x. 27). "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Undoubtedly he shall; and whilst those who know not the Master's will shall be beaten with few stripes, those who knew it, but did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes. There is a sin which hath never forgiveness either in this world or in that which is to come, and that sin is virtually the sin against the Holy Ghost, or a persistent rejection of the redemption that is in Christ, which the Holy Ghost has presented to the mind (Matt. xii. 32).

"Only eight persons were saved by water," says the Apostle. Does he mean to contrast with these the thousands that were saved through the preaching of Christ? This is not improbable, and as the times of Noah are elsewhere viewed as typical of later times (Matt. xxiv. 37; 2 Pet. ii. 5, iii. 7), so we may conclude that Christ's mercy was not limited to the sinners of that generation. It is a mysterious subject, which, perhaps more than any other, is now pressing itself upon thoughtful minds. But just as under the Old Testament dispensation the doctrine of a future state was only revealed but gradually; so, even under the New, the actual state of those who die in heathenism, and with little or no light from revelation, is too dimly made known for us to dogmatise about, and it were better far to entertain a wider hope than positively to affirm that the great majority of mankind are lost beyond the possibility of recovery.[1]

[1] "The race in its vast majority, the race as such is saved, the residue will be cast out, not only from God, but from mankind."—Dr. W. B. Pope.

III. THE TYPE AND THE ANTITYPE of the baptismal waters.

1. The flood was a type of baptism. In its waters Noah and his family were baptized, and, entering the ark, which was a type of the Church, were saved. They probably stepped into the ark just as the rain was beginning to descend and were thus sprinkled with it, as were the Israelites afterwards in the cloud and in the sea. But it was their faith that saved them. They believed God's threatenings, and they accepted His merciful provision for deliverance. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Heb. xi. 7).

2. The antitype, Christian baptism, saves us, or, literally, is now saving us. But how? Is it an *opus operatum?* Does it possess some magic virtue to regenerate our nature and make us children of God? This is the doctrine of Rome and of High-Churchism. But, the rite must be administered by men episcopally ordained, for otherwise it has no virtue at all, but is a mere rite and of no value! Is this St. Peter's doctrine? or was it the doctrine of the Apostle Paul? No; the baptism which saves us is no external thing. It is not, like the Jewish lustrations, the removal of the filth of the body, but the inquiry of a good conscience after God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Had St. Peter meant that there was anything in the rite

itself independent of the penitence and faith of the recipient, he would surely have spoken in very different words. And had St. Paul supposed that men were regenerate in baptism he would not have said to the Corinthians, "I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius" (1 Cor. i. 14).

No; baptism is the inquiry of a good conscience after God. The word here used, ἐπερώτημα, and used here only in the New Testament, does not mean the *answer* of a good conscience; but the seeking after one, towards God. The Apostle seems to allude to the question put by candidates for baptism, like the Ethiopian eunuch, who asked, as it were, How can we obtain a sense of the Divine favour? how can our troubled consciences be set at rest? "If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest be baptized," was the reply of Philip to the eunuch, and thus his baptism was the answer to his inquiry and the seal and earnest of his acceptance with God. But faith in Christ as the Son of God, and as having died and risen again, was the condition on which alone baptism could be of any avail, and on which the conscience could be rectified and made pure. It is so still. No outward washing can save; no lustrations of the body can make us holy in God's sight. The inner man must be renewed, and this can only be effected by the power of the Holy Ghost, who, revealing Christ to the soul as the great sacrifice for sin, purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. This is to be baptized,

not with water only, but with the Spirit from on high, and this is the only baptism by which we become new creatures in Christ Jesus—our risen and exalted Lord.

3. For Jesus not only rose from the dead but ascended up on high; and this great fact, the crowning one of all, the Apostle must also name: "Who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, angels and authorities and powers being subjected unto him" (cf. Ephes. i. 20, 21; Col. iii. 1). The Apostle himself was a witness of his Lord's ascension, and he knew also whither he had gone (Acts i. 9-11). He therefore speaks with confidence and declares that the greatest of all sufferers is now exalted above all creatures. There is a locality in the universe of God where the Father has His throne, and where He manifests Himself to the worshippers before it in transcendent glory. And there sits the person of our Lord—the glorified Redeemer, in His Divine and human nature conjoined. Because He humbled Himself God highly exalted Him. His is the name that is above every name, and the several orders of angelic beings, for angels are not all on an equality, are subjected to Him, so that they are marshalled at His command, and are executors of His will.

Some would distinguish the spirits here named as *messengers* who do God's will—ἄγγελοι; *principalities* who have special authority in this world—ἐξουσιῶν; and powers—δυνάμεων, because they bring about the great changes that take place in history; but whatever may be their special

functions Christ is their Head and Lord. He marshals all the armies of heaven, and they delight to obey His will. All power is given to Him in every sphere of creation; whilst, since He assumed His throne, everything on earth especially,—including poetry, music, and art, has entered on a new life, over which He presides, and which He is rendering conducive to His glory. "Christ is all, and in all." He is all in providence, all in nature, all in grace, and will be all in all for ever, both in the heavens and in the new-formed earth.

Such are the grand issues of the sufferings of our Lord. And now He is the Captain of our salvation, and is bringing many sons unto glory (Heb. ii. 10). If, then, we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified with Him, and as in His case so in ours, the very sufferings we sustain are working out for us a higher state of blessedness and joy.

Wouldst thou inherit life with Christ on high?
Then count the cost, and know
That here on earth below
Thou needs must suffer with thy Lord, and die.
We reach that gain to which all else is loss,
But through the cross.

Oh! think what sorrows Christ Himself has known;
The scorn and anguish sore,
The bitter death He bore,
Ere He ascended to His heavenly throne;
And deemest thou thou canst with right complain,
Whate'er thy pain.

Not e'en the sharpest sorrows we can feel,
Nor keenest pangs, we dare
With that great bliss compare,
When God His glory shall in us reveal,
That shall endure when our brief woes are o'er,
For evermore!

(SIMON DACH. 1640.)

THOUGHTS OF OTHER MINDS.

Ver. 18. The highest, most difficult, in fact, the only real enigma, which the saving counsel of God had to solve in the whole history of salvation, was the expiation of sinful man. Let this difficulty be overcome, and every other difficulty falls with it to the ground, so that the way is fully opened for the attainment of all the other blessings of salvation. The question was not, how could man, who had been created *by* and *for* God, attain to fellowship with God, and continue therein *as so created* (there would have been no difficulty in this; in fact, it would have followed, so to speak, as a matter of course); the question was, whether and how *sinful* man, notwithstanding his sin, which had severed all the bonds of fellowship with God, and rendered their reunion impossible, could nevertheless attain to that fellowship again. Nothing but expiation, *i.e.* the extermination of his sin, could render this impossibility possible. Consequently, the expiation of his sin was the Alpha and Omega for the wants and longings of a sinner desirous of fellowship with God; and, for that reason, the law of sacrifice, which meets these wants and this longing with its institutions of salvation, reiterates again and again, and, more than anything besides, its words, "to make atonement for him," or "the priest shall make atonement for him."—KURTZ.

Ver. 18. In this glorious truth, that the vicarious sufferings of our Lord have made full expiation for our sins, we should joyfully acquiesce, even though we were utterly incapable of perceiving how the means employed were fitted to gain the end. God, who knew what the expiation of sin required, appointed His incarnate Son to be the victim of human guilt, making to meet on him the iniquities of us all; and He has expressed, in the most unequivocal manner, that He is well pleased with the sacrifice He has presented. "I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do," said the Saviour. "Now, O Father! glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." And the Father heard Him, and answered Him. He raised Him from the dust of death, and placed Him at His own right hand, and gave Him all power in heaven and in earth, that He might give eternal life to all coming to the Father by Him; that in expecting pardon and salvation on the ground of His expiatory sacrifices, "our faith and hope might be in God."—DR. JOHN BROWN.

Ver. 19, 20. The spirits of whom he thought as hearing that message

were those who had been unbelieving, disobedient, corrupt, ungodly; but who yet had not hardened themselves in the one irremediable antagonism to good which has never forgiveness. The words, taken by themselves, might leave us in some doubt as to the nature and effect of that proclamation. But it is surely altogether monstrous to think, as some have thought, that He who a short time before had breathed the prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" who had welcomed, with a marvellous tenderness, the cravings of the repentant robber; who had felt, though but for a moment, the agony of abandonment, should pass into the world of the unseen only to tell the souls of the lost of a kingdom from which they were excluded, a blessedness in which they had neither part nor lot, to mock with the proclamation of a victory those who were only to be crushed under the chariot-wheels of the conqueror. We have not so learnt Christ as to think of that as possible.—PLUMPTRE.

Ver. 19, 20. He preached to them the victory that had now come to pass. He preached to the Old Testament dead the New Testament gospel of the now completed redemption (1 Pet. iii. 19, iv. 6). There the fallen angelic powers beheld Him as the conqueror; the Old Testament saints, as the Redeemer; those who had died in the attitude of hardening themselves, as the judge; and for many who, as in the judgment of the deluge, had been swallowed up by Hades in very unequal measures of sin, there were glimpses of deliverance still possible—DELITZSCH.

Ver. 19. With the living, Christ dealt in the flesh; with the spirits, in the spirit. He Himself hath power over the living and the dead. There are wonders in that world which lie beyond our ken. In a passage full of mystery we are not warranted to abandon the strict sense of the words, merely from want of parallel passages.—CRITICAL ENGLISH NEW TESTAMENT.

Ver. 19. Here Peter clearly states that Christ not only appeared to the departed fathers and patriarchs (some of whom, doubtless, Christ at His resurrection raised to eternal life), but also to some who had disbelieved in the days of Noah, and waited for the long-suffering of God, that is, hoped that God would not deal so severely with all flesh; He preached so as to let them see that their sins were pardoned through the sacrifice of Christ.—LUTHER.

XV.

THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOUR.

"*Forasmuch, then, as Christ suffered (for us) in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: because He that suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that ye may no longer live the rest of (your) time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For sufficient to us is the time past of life to have wrought out the will of the Gentiles, walking (as ye did) in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: in which they think it strange that ye run not with them in the same excess of profligacy, speaking evil of you: who shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the living and the dead. For, for this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit*"—(*Chap.* iv. 1-6).

THE Apostle is so absorbed with the theme of our Lord's passion that he connects it with all his exhortations and warnings, and seems as if he were never tired of setting it forth under one aspect or another.

In the preceding paragraph he has dwelt on the fact that Christ suffered for sins, and on the results that followed; and now he resumes the practical lessons which he wishes to deduce from it. "Christ then, having suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind;" and what a denunciation have we here of practical Antinomianism! and how minutely St. Peter describes the sins of the Gentile world! The Christian's armour, and the reasons why he should wear it, are the two main thoughts which we have here set before us.

I. THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOUR. 1. What is it? It is the mind or purpose of Christ. Some would render the word used here—ἔννοια—*the thought* of Christ, but Christ's thought was a practical one—one which was carried out in firm resolution. Such must ours be. We must arm ourselves, as for the warfare, with a determined mind, or a fixed resolve to suffer, but to suffer innocently or for well-doing, even as did our Lord Himself. His purpose when He came into the world was to suffer—to suffer, though He deserved it not, for the good of others, and for the salvation of the human race; and from that purpose he never swerved. Once He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke xii. 50.) and as the time of His last sufferings drew near, "He steadfastly set His face to go up to Jerusalem," knowing that *there* His deeper sufferings would come upon Him. In the midst of His agony in the garden His human nature trembled, and He prayed that the cup of bitterness might pass from Him; yet He added with profound submission, "Father, not my will but Thine be done."

Is suffering our lot? Are we called, in any measure, to drink of His cup? We are not to start back from it, but to possess His self-sacrificing and noble spirit, and to sustain whatever may be laid upon us with holy courage and with unshaken hope. It is a privilege to suffer in a righteous cause; but those only can suffer with patience and resignation, and for the Divine glory, who have put on

Christ, who possess His mind, who are armed with the resolution that bore him through. Men there are, of indomitable will and of wondrous self-determination, who can, if they choose, bear excessive pain without betraying any signs of feeling; but their stoicism would not serve them in the face of many of the Christian's trials. Something more is wanted to bear contumely, scorn, and derision, with patience than the natural man possesses; but obtaining the mind of Christ, we learn to endure as seeing Him who is invisible, and, like the martyrs of the early Church, we can even brave the faggot and the stake.

2. There is a special need for this armour, "Because," says the Apostle, "he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;" or, "he that hath suffered as to the flesh is made to cease from sin." The sentence is general and refers first to Christ, who, having suffered in the flesh, had no more to do with sin; but further it refers to those who *are* Christ's, and implies that the sufferings they undergo for His sake end in complete deliverance from sin. Who are they that gain the victory over sin but those who, arming themselves with the mind of their Saviour, suffer as He did, with calm and holy resignation to the will of God? The two things—suffering in the flesh and ceasing from sin—go hand in hand; for it is seldom that sin is overcome without suffering, and to bear suffering with patience is a sure indication that sin is underneath our feet. I do not say that suffering itself

will ever lead to patience,—far from it, for it makes men fretful, peevish, irritable, and rebellious; but suffering sanctified by the Holy Ghost has a very different tendency, and brings out some of the finest traits of the Christian character upon which the world has ever looked. Would you be such Christians as you are called to be? would you attain the lofty standard of piety which St. Peter presents to us in this epistle? arm yourselves with the mind of Christ, put on the Lord Jesus, let the firm purpose to suffer according to the will of God which dwelt in Him dwell also in you; then will you have rest from sin, for then sin will have no more dominion over you, but you will have dominion over it.

3. For this is the grand end to be gained—"That," or "to the end that, he should not live[1] the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." It is here implied that a large portion of our pilgrim life has been spent in gratifying our desires as men of the world —in the pursuit of sinful pleasures and the attainment of temporal good. Is it not high time to turn over a new leaf? The rest of our days may be very few, and ought, therefore, to be occupied with nobler aims. "The will of God," says one, "ought to be our only pole-star." Our whole life should have His glory for its object, and His

[1] The word βιῶσαι, says Bengel, is appropriate here. "It is never used concerning brutes." Only man can live in the true sense of the word—a life in and for God.

approval as its aim. But how can this be, unless we have the mind of Christ? To live the rest of our time, whether it prove long or brief, in accordance with the will of God, as that will is revealed to us in the Scripture and by the teachings of His Providence, we must possess the purpose of our Lord; for His purpose was always expressed in the prayer, "Father, not my will but Thine be done;" and if in any measure we lack resignation to God's will, we, in so far, lack the mind of Christ.

II. THE REASONS WHY THIS ARMOUR SHOULD BE WORN.

1. The former state of those whom the Apostle addresses is still more clearly marked by the expression, "They wrought the will of the Gentiles." The Jews of the dispersion, who had become Christians, once lived, if they were not living now, in the midst of idolatrous Gentiles, who sought to lead them into all kinds of excesses, and not without success. And what a picture of these excesses is here given! Open lasciviousness, secret lusts, wine-bibbings, revellings, drinking-bouts,[1] and abominable idolatries! Illustrations of all these sad things may be found in the Greek and Roman poets, who frequently speak of the orgies of Bacchus; and that beings calling themselves men could ever condescend to become such brutes is evidence of the terrible degeneracy of human nature. But did the Jews ever give way to them? St. Paul implies that they did (Rom. ii.

[1] The word here used, πότος, means this—a carousal or drinking-bout. See Liddell and Scott.

1, 2), and here St. Peter positively affirms it. They "walked" in their sins as if they became the element of their being. And there are Christians to-day to whom it may be said, "and such were some of you." Happy for those who never were, for it is better not to have known the pathway of transgression than to have known it and have turned away from it. But not a few in our own land are even now worshippers at the shrine of Bacchus; whilst many have happily forsaken it, to return to it no more.

2. From this state believers in Christ have been delivered, considering that the past has been sufficient, and more than sufficient. "The time past of our life may surely suffice us," says the Apostle, almost in a tone of irony; and ye have given up your former course, or ought to do it, whatever consequences may ensue. Can *Christians* frequent ball-rooms, and theatres, and race-courses, and bacchanalian pleasure scenes? or can they *connive* at such things, and read about them in the public newspapers, though, for the sake of appearances, they absent themselves from them? Is England really a Christian country, when such sights as those of the Derby-day take place within it?—when the House of Commons makes a holiday that its members may go there and perhaps gamble with the common herd?—when thousands of its young people are allured, in this way, into the gulf of temporal and eternal ruin? What is this but infidelity in high places, and something worse?

The ungodly of the Apostle's days thought it strange

that believers should discard them and not join them in their riotous excesses; and, because they would not join them they were evil spoken of and persecuted. Some interpret the passage "They are astonished that you run not with them to the same slough," just as, after violent rain, the gutters rush into a common sewer. It is so in our day. The world still wonders that Christians forsake it, and will no longer join in its sinful pleasures. How often does a young man, for example, who, by the grace of God, has turned his back upon his former companions in sin, hear them express their surprise at what they deem his folly, as they try to persuade him to go with them again to the theatre, or the ball-room, or the very sinks of iniquity! And because he will not, he becomes the butt of their ridicule, the subject of their scorn, and the victim of their open or petty persecution. Well, let him stand firm, for his enemies will one day be called to give an account to Him that is ready to judge the living and the dead. He is *ready* to judge them. All things are prepared. He is even now their judge; and, when they die, He will be again their judge; for before His throne must all be made manifest, every secret thing being brought to light, whether it be good or whether it be evil.

3. The judgment will be universal, says the Apostle further. One thought suggests to him another. Having just spoken of Christ as the judge of the living and the dead, he now affirms that the dead—those who are now

dead—will be judged according to men in the flesh, that is as those now living will be judged. But to those now living the gospel has been preached. They have heard of the redemption provided for them through Christ Jesus; and have, therefore, been placed in the most favourable circumstances for preparing for the judgment and escaping final condemnation. Is this the case also with the dead? with the heathen world, who indeed ran to all kinds of excess in sin, but never had the light of revelation? The Apostle answers in the affirmative, for the Gospel was preached to them also; for when Christ, in His disembodied spirit, went into Hades, He proclaimed to them the good tidings of salvation, and offered to them deliverance from their prison and a title to eternal life.[1] St. Peter goes back to the former passage (ch. iii. 18), and re-affirms the fact of Christ's preaching to the inhabitants of the unseen world; and further, he affirms the object of the preaching—that they, being judged as having merited death, might, notwithstanding, live, as regards the spirit. St. Paul affirms, "The body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness" (Rom. viii. 10), meaning that the body, even of a Christian, dies on account of sin, but that the spirit lives because of the righteousness it has obtained through Christ. Even so have all past genera-

[1] Some suppose that His ministry was not confined to the few hours which elapsed between His death and resurrection, but was continued afterwards; but of this Scripture says nothing whatever.

tions died, whilst the antediluvians especially, and others who died in a state of alienation from God, were judged to imprisonment in Hades, until Christ came and offered them salvation. If any of them accepted it, and perhaps many of them did, they already live in the spirit, having entered upon a state of blessedness which Christ prepared even for them.

Many commentators give a different interpretation to this passage, but this is the only one which its construction will bear; and it was that given to it in early times. It was that of Justin Martyr, of Clement of Alexandria, and of many others; and now some of the most eminent critics acknowledge that this is the true meaning of the Apostle's words. The Romish doctrine of purgatory drove the Christian Church to the opposite extreme of denying that there is any hope for men beyond the grave, whatever may have been the ignorance in which they lived and died. But, certainly, such a doctrine is not found in the Holy Scriptures, and if the opposite one is not fully unfolded it is probably because men would take advantage of it, and be all the more disposed to reject the offers of salvation made to them in this present life. Is it objected that missions to the heathen are, in this case, unnecessary? We reply, By no means, for better far that men should be saved *now* than hereafter, as they would then enter the unseen world already prepared for a state of blessedness; besides which, those who are now saved out of the various

nations under heaven will constitute the bride—the lamb's wife—the Church of the first-born, whose glorified state will be far loftier than that of the saved nations beyond the pale of the Church (Rev. xxi. 24–25).

I am persuaded that on this subject we have much both to learn and to unlearn. I am no universalist, nor do I believe that men can reject with impunity the world's Redeemer; "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb. x. 26, 27); yet I cannot but hope that God's great mercy will reach, in some way, the myriads of our race that scarcely ever heard of Christ in this life. And what if part of the employment of disembodied saints is to visit the abodes of such, and bring them home to the fold of the great Shepherd whose blood was shed for them also! True there is a great gulf fixed between such as Lazarus and the rich man, for they had the light of the revelation—the teaching of Moses and of the prophets (Luke xvi. 26); but are we to infer that any such gulf separates between the saved and those who never had that light—never had the teaching either of prophets or apostles? I know that many who had not the light of revelation had the light of conscience and of nature, and that, sinning against such light, they were "without excuse" (Rom. i. 18-20); nor do I doubt that their state hereafter is a sad and fearful one,

though whether a hopeless one, until after the final judgment, I dare not say. But, beyond the enlightened Gentiles of the Apostles' days, there were millions of the race who had little or no light at all; and such there are in our own days, in almost every portion of the globe. Is there no hope for them? Are they lost to Christ, to heaven, to a blessed immortality for ever? These words of St. Peter shed at least a few rays of light on this mysterious question; and if they are but few, we ought not, I think, to turn away our eyes from looking at them, but rather to rejoice that they are given. To the Apostles Jesus said: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mark xvi. 16, 17); "In which utterance," says an eminent commentator, "it is testified and sealed, as if spoken in as many express words, that *without* the preaching of the Gospel going before, *no man* can be or may be conclusively condemned; that it may, and must, be preached to all; and that this, if it do not take place in this life, must necessarily take place after death. Thus, the whole doctrine concerning an intermediate place, and its economy of forbearance and salvation, *down to the full ripeness of unbelief in the whole world*, has here its plain demonstration."

But we are not the less bound to preach the Gospel to all nations now, for that is our Lord's express command, and missions to the heathen are the means of elevating

vast masses of them in this life, and of leading thousands of them into the possession of a present and an everlasting salvation. Those who die, having never heard the Gospel here, may have its tidings preached to them in Hades; but we who have received it must spread it far and wide, and in the work of missions we shall find the grandest field for the display of Christian self-sacrifice, whilst we shall see many accepting our message with holy joy, and becoming at once partakers of the benefit.

But how fearful a lesson is there here for unbelievers. For those who hear the Gospel now, but persistently reject it, these words hold out no hope whatever. And there are some of you who, by your neglect of this salvation, are imperilling your deathless spirits and are even now standing on the brink of ruin. You cannot be as the heathen who worship wood and stone. You cannot throw off your responsibilities as men living within the sound of the Gospel trumpet, and be no more accountable than those who never hear it. *Your* sin, whatever their's may be, is the sin of unbelief, and it is that sin that condemns—that sin which renders you so guilty before God. O, abandon it—abandon it without delay; and whilst yet the streams of mercy are flowing at your feet make haste and drink of them lest they flow past you for ever.

THOUGHTS OF OTHER MINDS.

Ver. 1. As our lusts fight against us, so we must furnish ourselves like soldiers, that we may prevail against them. It is no easy thing to get out of sin, or to get the mastery thereof; it is to mortify our members, to pluck out our right eyes, and cut off our right hands. It is easier to take any pains in offering sacrifice, nay, fast extraordinarily, and to part with our goods, with thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil, yea, with our first-born, than to part with one beloved sin. They that would overcome their lusts must not stand still or be without weapons; we have that within us which rebelleth against the law of God, and would lead us captive to the law of sin which is in our members.—ROGERS.

Ver. 1. Christ suffering bodily freed us from sin, and we, participating by faith in the sufferings of Christ, die unto sin.—STEIGER.

Ver. 1. The Christian's best armour against the assaults of suffering is the obedient and submissive mind of suffering in which Christ accepted His suffering as a cup tendered by the paternal hand of God. —FRONMULLER.

Ver. 1. Will you fret at sufferings and tribulations? If you knew the wholesomeness of the cup you would joyfully empty it (Ezek. ii. 6). The beloved cross is like strong salt: as the latter prevents corruption, so does the cross prevent the corruption of the flesh.—STARKE.

Ver. 2. It is most irrational to desire that our own or others' wills should be done; and most equitable that we should pray that God's will may be done. "Should it be as thou wilt, according to thy mind?" saith Elihu to Job (Chap. xxxiv. v. 33). Who are we, poor blind creatures, that we should set our wills against the wise, and just, and holy will of God? Should His will, who can will nothing but what is just and good, give place to ours, who can will nothing that is good, without His enabling grace (Phil. ii. 13; 2 Cor. iii. 5)? How just is it, that His will should be our rule, whether we consider Him as our Creator, our Sovereign, our Father, etc.; and, besides, should ours be done, would it not be to our undoing. What greater plague than for a people to be given up to follow their own counsels (Ps. lxxxi. 12)? And is not the doing God's will the high road to glory, the straight path to everlasting felicity?—OLDFIELD. 1671.

Ver. 2. Undoubtedly there is a degree of natural pleasure connected with the exercise of the appetites which is lawful. But it is very obvious that self in the natural man, which is always seeking for pleasure, without regarding either its nature or its lawfulness, has polluted everything here. It is in connection with the appetites in their unsanctified state, that we find one of the strong ties which bind man to his idols, and which subject his proud spirit. This strong bond must be sundered. No one can be acceptable to God who does not crucify and reject every form of attraction and pleasure from this source which is not in accordance with the intentions of nature, and does not receive the divine approbation and sanction.—UPHAM.

Ver. 3. Now, says the Christian, O corrupt lusts and deluding world, look for no more; I have served you too long. The rest, whatsoever it is, must be to my Lord, to live to Him by whom I live; and ashamed and grieved I am I was so long in beginning; so much past, it may be the most of my short race past, before I took notice of God, or looked towards him. O how have I lost, and worse than lost, all my past days! Now, had I the advantages and abilities of many men, and were I to live many ages, all should be to live to my God and honour Him. And what strength I have, and what time I shall have, through His grace, shall be wholly His. And when any Christian hath thus resolved, his intended life being so imperfect, and the time so short, the poorness of the offer would break his heart, were there not an eternity before him, wherein he shall live to his God, and in Him, without blemish and without end.—LEIGHTON.

Ver. 6. The dead here, contrasted with the living, must naturally mean those who were in the state of the dead when this message came to them. It sounds like an unexpected and mysterious extension of the Gospel message, so that not living men alone, but the departed also, came directly within the range of its proclamation. The change was to affect their state, not in the sight of men, but of God alone. The men in the days of Noah, the dwellers in the cities of the plain, the Egyptian host, the Canaanite armies, to the eye of men were all swept away in one indiscriminate judgment. Yet in each case there may have been a secret and powerful work of repentance, by which a remnant turned to God in the hour of calamity and desolation. To all such the message of mercy might come, when our Lord, in His separate spirit,

preached to the dead, to the spirits in prison; and the destined result was attained, "that they might live according to God in the spirit," or gain a firm hold on that Saviour and His finished sacrifice; on whom, as the promised seed of the woman, with a dim and starlight faith they had learned to put their trust in the hour of judgment, when all their refuges of lies were swept away.—BIRKS.

XVI.

THE APPROACHING END.

But the end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. Above all things having your love towards one another fervent, because love covereth a multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without murmuring. As each one hath received a gift of grace, (so) minister it one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any speaketh (speaking) as the oracles of God; if any ministereth (ministering) as of the ability which God giveth; that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.—(*Chap.* iv. 7-11.)

THE Apostles of our Lord lived in an age of vicissitude and conflict. Rome was in the ascendancy, but the glory of the empire was obscured by the profligacy and wickedness of its rulers; and the Christian Church, yet in its infancy, was the subject of their cruel and relentless persecutions. At the same time, Judaism was tottering to its fall, and, ere many years elapsed, the proud city and temple of Jerusalem would be laid level with the dust, an event which Christ had Himself predicted, and which His disciples doubtless anticipated. Was it strange, then, that Peter should say, "The end of all things is at hand?" Whether, as some suppose, he looked for the speedy coming of the Lord to judgment, or whether he referred, as others think, to the expected downfall of the Jewish polity, is not very certain; but his words are most impressive, and the exhortations he here gives are of the highest moment to

Christians of every age. Let us look at this announcement, and at the lessons founded on it.

I. THE ANNOUNCEMENT. It is like the voice of a trumpet —clear, distinct, and far-reaching. "The end of all things is at hand."

1. In what sense was it then true? In the widest and most literal sense that the expression will bear, it was not true, for upwards of eighteen centuries have passed away, and the end has not yet come. And, indeed, "of that day and of that hour knoweth no man," said our Lord (Mark xiii. 32), for the *precise period* of the final judgment was one of those mysteries which even St. John, in the Apocalypse, did not unfold. Is it surprising, then, if the Apostle supposed that the end of all things was nearer than it really was? But if he referred to the end of that age—to the end of the Jewish dispensation, it was indeed true; for, but a few years after this epistle was written, the army of Titus besieged the city of Jerusalem, entered it in triumph, set on fire its glorious temple, and thus swept away the rites and ceremonies which were then observed, never to be observed again. It was a terrible judgment, and, as we read of it in the pages of Josephus, we quail at the thought of the Divine majesty and glory so conspicuously made manifest at that crisis. But, as some think, the Apostle meant the end of all *these* things[1] is at hand—the follies of the

[1] πάντων stands prefixed, and is, therefore, emphatic. See Bengel and Alford.

wicked, and the persecutions of the righteous; and certainly they were, so that only for a little while longer would the enemies of God's people be permitted to rage, and only for a little while longer would God's people be the subjects of reproach and shame. Death would soon put an end to both, and both would soon appear before the Judge of all.

2. In what sense is it true now? We are living in the nineteenth century of the Christian era; is the end of it approaching? or is *an* end of the present dispensation near? Some interpreters of prophecy think so. They believe that the manifestation of Christ from heaven is at hand, when He will raise the bodies of the sainted dead, change those that are alive, and commence His millenial reign on the earth; thus fulfilling the predictions of Isaiah (ch. xi.), of St. Paul (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17), and of St. John (Rev. xix. 11-16). The conception is a grand one, and possibly it may be realised; but the personal reign of Christ *on the earth*, as the earth is at present constituted, is difficult to imagine; nor does the language of any of the Apostles teach it. When He comes the saints are to be caught up to meet Him in the air, and they are to live and reign with Him a thousand years; but it is nowhere said that this will be on the earth (Rev. xx. 5, 6). Rather will it be in some other of the many mansions of our Father's house; whilst the reign of Christ on earth will be a spiritual one over the nations who, by the manifestation

of Himself in the heavens, will be led to acknowledge Him as their King and Lord.

We cannot, however, affirm positively that these events are nigh; all we can say is that possibly they may be. But there is a sense in which the announcement of St. Peter is always true; to us personally the end of all things is indeed at hand, for the brittle thread of life may break at any time, and even the healthiest and most vigorous of us all may in a few hours be numbered with the clods of the valley. Be it so, that this is a mere truism, yet truisms need to be re-asserted from time to time, for men lose sight of them, and of this, their own mortality, sooner perhaps than of any other. Yes; to us personally, to each reader of this page, the end of all things—of his earthly life, with its joys and sorrows, its hopes and disappointments, its conflicts and its victories—is drawing nigh; and it becomes him therefore to be ever on his watch-tower, to be ready for the summons, to be in an attitude of waiting for the coming of the Son of Man. An eminent modern preacher has said that a man of forty has but 30,000 working hours left, and if a man of sixty makes the calculation he will find that his working hours are so few that he will almost tremble at the thought. For trifling, for careless living, for mere pleasure-taking, we have no time, and woe is unto us if the Master comes and finds us thus engaged.

II. THE LESSONS are numerous and impressive, and should be considered with the utmost care.

1. Sobriety is inculcated. "Be ye therefore *sober*." The word means "be temperate," or, "of a temperate and thoughtful mind." "Take heed," said our Lord to His disciples, "lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares" (Luke xxi. 34). But is such counsel necessary for Christians, and for Christians of our own times? It is; for there are many, we fear, who are far from being as temperate at the table as they ought to be, and whose luxuriant habits are by no means conducive to spiritual religion. Is there no excess of wine among the professed followers of Christ? and is the custom of drinking healths, yet so common among them, one that comports with true sobriety? And are we all temperate in other respects—in our secular pursuits, in our daily associations, in our mental habitudes, in our hopes and anticipations? The injunction, *be sober*, is addressed to all aerial castle builders who are full of high expectations that one day they will be possessed of riches and honour, but whose castles may prove to be of paper cards, which, ere long, will tumble to the ground. Let not Christian men set their expectations in reference to this life too high; but, whilst engaged in the pursuits of trade and commerce, let them remember that riches, even if gained, may as soon, or sooner, take their flight, and let them use this world as not abusing it, knowing that the fashion of it passeth away.

2. Watchfulness and prayer are essential. Literally the words are *be sober unto prayers.*[1] Temperance promotes vigilance, and vigilance leads to prayer. The word is in the plural because there are different kinds of prayer—public, family, private, none of which a Christian man can afford to neglect. But there can be no preparation for the duty when the mind is *absorbed* either in the pursuit of pleasure or in the pursuit of riches, or even in the pursuit of the arts and sciences. He only can bow the knee in a right spirit, and hold real fellowship with God, who is able to throw off all temporal affairs like a loose garment, and, free from distracting thoughts, at once address himself to his Father who is in heaven. Nor is this impossible. We may possess such a spirit of watchfulness—such a spirit of sobriety, as to be able to step from the most exciting scenes of public life, or the most distracting care of secular business, into an atmosphere of holy meditation and of hallowed communion with heaven. And how great a privilege is this, especially to Christian men of business! The morning and the evening hour of prayer at the domestic altar or in the closet, together with the moments they set apart for devotion in the midst of the day's pursuits, will be the happiest of their lives, and in thus waiting upon God they will renew their strength and will rise superior to all the depressing influences of public life.

[1] νήψατε εἰς τὰς προσευχάς.

And let no one doubt the efficacy and power of prayer. The scepticism of the age speaks of "the order of nature," and asks if God will disturb that order to grant the request of such a creature as man? We answer, Yes, if it were needful; but needful it is not, as there are other laws of nature of which we know nothing, in virtue of which God can answer prayer whilst nature proceeds upon her wonted course. God has made provision in the great plan of the universe to meet all the foreseen necessities of His people, and to answer all their foreseen requests as it is best He should; and, whilst in some instances, answers to prayer have seemed to men miraculous, in others they have been granted whilst yet no disturbance of any law of nature has taken place. The history of the Church, and the experience of thousands of its members, rebuke the unbelief of men in the real power of prayer; and God has pledged Himself to hear, and, in some way, to answer, every petition presented to Him in faith through His beloved Son.

3. Charity must be cultivated. "And above all things having your love towards one another intense, because love covereth a multitude of sins." Love is not above prayer, but, where love is wanting, prayer is hindered. The love here inculcated is brotherly love among Christians—love towards one another; and it is to be intense or fervent—ἐκτενῆ—a glowing love, an ardent love, a burning love which many waters cannot quench. Such a love will display itself in the warm grasp of the hand, in the tenderest

tones of the voice, in the most ready step of the feet; thus pouring itself into the bosom of another with the utmost delight and joy.

And such love "covereth a multitude of sins." The words refer to Prov. x. 12, "Hatred stirreth up strifes, but love covereth all sins;" and nearly parallel are the words of St. James v. 20, "He which converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." But what is meant by it? Whose sins does love cover? Not my own in the sight of God, for they can be covered only by the blood of Christ, appropriated by my faith. The meaning is that the Christian's love hides from his view the faults of others, so that he does not see them; or, if he sees them, does not exaggerate them, talk about them to others, or take pleasure in dwelling upon them. In some instances he cannot lose sight of them entirely, but he remembers that he has faults and failings of his own, and he judges with the charity which he wishes to be exercised towards himself (1 Cor. xiii. 47). But ought we, then, to be lax and indifferent to the sins of others? That would imply a want of principle, and would be false charity, not true. We are bound to see sin where it is glaring and open, and to reprove it in the most decided terms; yet the failings of our Christian brethren we may cover up and hide, even as God, for Christ's sake, has hidden ours. Of this beautiful grace of charity Cowper thus sings:—

Pure in her aim, and in her temper mild,
Her wisdom seems the weakness of a child;
She makes excuses where she might condemn,
Reviled by those that hate her, prays for them.
Suspicion lurks not in her artless breast,
The worst suggested, she believes the best.

4. Hospitality is to be used. "Be hospitable towards one another, without murmuring."[1] The word means loving strangers, and treating them kindly. The Christian is to be "given to hospitality" (Rom. xii. 13), for the Lord will say to those on His right hand, in the last day, "I was a stranger, and ye took me in" (Matt. xxv. 35). In entertaining strangers some have entertained angels unawares, as did Abraham and Lot (Gen. xviii. 1-3, xix. 1), and never does true hospitality go unrewarded, for it tends to enlarge the affections of the soul, and to increase the circle of our friends. It must, however, be without grudging, or, as the word properly means, without murmuring. To receive a stranger into your house, and, all the while he is there, to wish him gone, is not hospitality, but the mere pretence to it. Yet it is not needful that you should make a great feast and an ostentatious show in order to be hospitable. A poor man who shares his last loaf with a stranger is just as much so as a man of wealth who asks him to a richly-laden board. The measure of our hospitality must be according to our means. A Christian minister should be

[1] *ἄνευ γογγυσμῶν.* The opposite to murmuring, says Alford, is simple open-handedness and hospitality.

"a lover of hospitality" (Tit. i. 8), but in many instances his house is but a cottage, and his table humbly spread, so that, gladly as he would help the stranger who may call, he scarcely has it in his power. What then? let him do his best, and God will accept it as if it were much more.

But not to every one who may appeal to our benevolence is our hospitality to extend. In these days at least we may be imposed upon by idlers and pretenders; and therefore must we use our best judgment and learn to discriminate between the precious and the vile. The truest objects of hospitality are exiled Christians who have been banished from their homes; or persecuted ones who have been bereft of property and friends for their love to Christ and to the truth; or afflicted ones whose sufferings have entailed on them poverty and distress; and of these there are always many. There are more indeed than private Christians can entertain and assist, and hence the value of such institutions as hospitals for the sick and poor, which many can help to support and to extend who can do little in the way of private hospitality.

5. The employment of gifts is the last thing here named. God has bestowed upon each man *a gift of grace*,[1] and he is to use it for the benefit of others. The gifts here referred to are not miraculous ones only, but, as the following words imply, the ordinary gifts of the Spirit, including also natural endowments of body or of mind.

[1] The word is χάρισμα, *a* gift, not *the* gift as in our version; but the gifts of God are various and diversified.

These we are to employ "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." How richly various are the gifts which God bestows upon his servants. The Church is like a flower-garden in which the rose, the lily, the violet, and a hundred other flowers present their beauties to the eye, and exhale their fragrance on the air. And, as each of these wonderful creations fulfils its own purpose in the eternal mind, so are men of different talents and of varied gifts to use them for the ends designed. The flower does not know that it blooms, or that it is fragrant, but is perfectly passive in the field of nature. Man is an intelligent being, and it is his high prerogative to use his gifts with the consciousness that he is a steward who must give account. O see to it that you are a good steward—a faithful steward, for of your stewardship you will one day be reminded, and only will you be permitted to retain it if you have used it well. All gifts involve responsibilities, yet it is an honour to possess them, and if we have also grace to employ them aright they will be doubled to us in a future life.

The gift of speaking must be used, those who have it being *oracles*[1] *of God.* It is thought by some a very desirable gift, for it implies superior powers of oratory, which attract the ears of men. But it must be used, not for display, not with a view to popularity, not as if it were

[1] Not *the* oracles, for there is no reference to the Scripture here. Each one is to speak as uttering the sayings of God, and not his own.

something of our own of which we might be proud; but as a gift of God bestowed on us for the benefit of others, and for the glory of His great name. He who prophesies or teaches must do it as God's oracle, uttering his words in God's name and as God's messenger and representative to men. He may cultivate eloquence as an art, that he may use it with greater power, but he must ever consider himself as God's mouthpiece to the people, remembering that he is an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ, who has entrusted him with a message which he must faithfully proclaim.

The gifts of ministering must be employed as *of the ability or power which God giveth.* Several such gifts are spoken of by St. Paul (Rom. xii. 8; 1 Cor. xii. 28), but they all spring from God as from a fountain, or are furnished out of his rich and exhaustless treasury. Who, then, has any room for boasting? To make a parade of any of the gifts by which we are able to minister to others, or to extol self in the use of them, is to forget that we have nothing that we have not received. Yet how difficult it is to get rid of self! It follows us everywhere like our shadow, and, however we may run from it, tracks our every step. One of our hymnists prays:

> O Lord! that I could waste my life for others,
> With no ends of my own;
> That I could pour myself into my brothers,
> And live for them alone.

It is not impossible, for this hated self may be subdued by grace; and, when it is subdued, we minister to others as physicians or nurses in a hospital, without thinking of ourselves at all.

Finally, all must be done for the Divine glory. "That," says the Apostle, "in all of you, or in all things, God may be glorified through Jesus Christ." Whatever is done by the Christian at home or abroad, in the family or in the Church, must be done for the honour of the Lord Jehovah, through Him whose sole aim was the glory of the Father, and who came, not to do his own will but the will of Him that sent Him (John xvii. 4). We are often actuated in our Church life by personal motives, seeking our own honour, and anxious to obtain the praise of men; and sometimes we are actuated by mixed motives, having God's glory partly in view, but not losing sight of our own. O, when our motives are thoroughly purified, and we learn to live and act only for the Divine glory, how lofty will be our piety, and how transparent our character and our lives! But is it possible to aim at this only, and in all we do? Yes: "love seeketh not her own," but the welfare of others and the glory of God through Christ, and where she reigns supreme in the heart self dies and is content to die.

To God belong praise and dominion for ever and ever, or literally to the ages of ages;[1] and here the Apostle ascribes them to Him, adding an emphatic AMEN, expres-

[1] εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. ἀμήν.

sive of his assurance that it shall be so. The word means *verily*, and is here not a note of conclusion, but a declaration of the fact that, through all eternity, all the redeemed shall conspire to give praise and dominion to the Triune God (cf. Rev. i. 6; v. 11-14).

THOUGHTS OF OTHER MINDS.

Ver. 7. It might be objected that a long series of ages has elapsed since Peter wrote this, and still the end is not yet seen. I answer, that to us the time seems long, for this reason, that we measure its length by the spaces of the present life; but that, could we have respect to the perpetuity of the life to come, many generations would be for us as it were a moment (2 Pet. iii. 8). Moreover, it must be held as a first principle that, ever since the appearing of Christ, there is nothing left to the faithful but with wakeful minds to be always intent on His second advent.—CALVIN.

Ver. 8. "*Fervent.*" Literally: intense, unremitting, unwearied. Now, there is a feeble sentiment which wishes well to all so long as it is not tempted to wish them ill, which does well to those who do well to them. But this, being merely sentiment, will not last. Ruffle it, and it becomes vindictive. In contrast with that, St. Peter calls Christ's spirit, which loves those who hate it, "fervent" charity; which does not tire, and cannot be worn out; which loves its enemies, and does good to them that hate it. For Christian love is not the dream of a philosopher, sitting in his study, and benevolently wishing the world were better than it is, congratulating himself, perhaps, all the time on the superiority shown by himself over other less amiable natures. Injure one of these beaming sons of good nature, and he bears malice—deep, unrelenting, refusing to forgive. But give us the man who, instead of retiring to some small, select society, or rather association, where his own opinions shall be reflected, can mix with men where his sympathies are unmet, and his tastes are jarred, and his views traversed, at every turn, and still can be just, and gentle, and forbearing.—F. W. ROBERTSON.

Ver. 8. I think it must be very plain to all that the sins here referred to are offences committed by one brother against another; and that the assertion of the Apostle is, that a brother, under the influence of that fervent charity which he has been enjoining, will cover these offences, even though there should be many of them; will, so far as the peace and edification of the brotherhood—whether as individuals or a body—are concerned, really make them as if they had never existed.—DR. J. BROWN.

Ver. 10. Everyone hath a several and diverse gift, as it were; some for magistracy—as courage, wisdom, policy; some for the ministry—as knowledge, interpretation of Scripture, the gift of utterance, exhortation, love, zeal, &c. Some to be householders, some skill in physics, husbandry, law, merchandising, &c. Everyone hath not the same, neither hath one man all. As a general of a field disposeth of his men, all be soldiers, but not all of one kind, some be horsemen, some be footmen, and of these some pikemen, some musketeers; so hath God disposed of men severally. And this God hath done, for the knitting of us together in love, that none might be lifted up above all others, nor despise any, each being of use in his place. None can live of himself, none without the help of others. The prince not without the subject, nor the subject without the prince; ministers have their maintenance from the people, people through their preaching attain faith to the salvation of their souls. The rich want skill, neither are able to do their own work, therefore employ the poor about it, and relieve them. The lawyer cannot be without the client, nor the physician live without patients; the merchant cannot be without the clothier, nor the husbandman without the tradesman, each must partake of the others' gift.—ROGERS.

Ver. 11.—The glory of God, or the shewing forth of His nature and attributes, is necessarily His own chief end in all His works of creation and providence. It is so especially in the wondrous constitution of the Church, and must therefore be her chief end also in all the service that she renders to His name. And as God's love to her flows ever in the channel of Christ's mediation, and Christ's presence with her by His word and spirit is the sole cause of her life and activity, so, likewise, it is "through Jesus Christ" that her answering tribute of praise reaches the eternal throne.—LILLIE.

XVII.

THE FIERY TRIAL.

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing were happening unto you, but so far as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice; that in the revelation of His glory ye may be glad with exultation. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ happy are ye, for (the Spirit) of glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon you. [On their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified.] But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busy-body in other men's matters; yet if any suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but glorify God in this name"—(Chap. iv. 12-16.)

THE Apostles of our Lord could sympathise with others. Partakers, in some measure, of His sufferings, they knew how to feel for their suffering fellow-men; and in almost all their Epistles they display that peculiar tenderness of heart which can only be learnt in the school of Christ. St. Paul rejoiced in the comfort with which he himself was comforted because it taught him to comfort others (2 Cor. i. 4). St. John left on record the precious words of Jesus, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John xiv. 27); and St. Peter here encourages the elect strangers on the prospect of the trials that awaited them in the future. Those know best how to sympathise who have tasted of the bitter cup of trial, and one of the uses of pain and sorrow is to soften the heart, naturally so indifferent to the woes of others.

"Beloved," says the Apostle, an expression which in itself conveys the idea of brotherly affection, "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial[1] which is to try you;" and then he proceeds to tell them what sources of consolation are open to them, and how they may rejoice even in the midst of tribulations.

The fiery trial! What can be said of this? It was to try the Christians of that age; it is to try the Christians of the present; but it is here viewed in an aspect which breaks its force, for it is not a strange thing, it is a matter of joy; it is endured for Christ's sake and leads to good.

I. IT IS NOT A STRANGE THING. Be not astonished at the persecutions and trials you are called to bear, for they are only what you might expect. Whether by the fiery trial the Apostle here means some great calamity that was impending over the Churches in those days, such as the destruction of Jerusalem; or the persecutions which were inflicted by the Roman Emperors, and which were wide-spread in their range, we cannot positively affirm; but some severe conflict he evidently anticipated, and the expression he uses is most significant. It would be a fiery trial, a trial by burning,[1] which causes the severest pain to which the flesh is subject. Great tribulation burns like fire, and it was the lot of many of the early Christians. Imprisonment, torture, the rack, the stake, were inflicted upon them

[1] Literally, "the burning"—πύρωσις—"the passing through the fire."

without mercy, their enemies often taking delight in witnessing the sufferings they caused them to sustain.

But it was not a strange thing.[1] It had been the lot of others. Who of the Old Testament saints did not pass through a fiery trial? Not Abraham, for his trials were most severe, and were repeated in a variety of forms almost to his latest years. Not Job, for he was bereft of property, children, health, and friends, until his grief was almost more than he could bear. Not Moses, for his was a life of conflict from the day that he forsook the court of Pharaoh to the hour when he was told that he must die in the wilderness. Not David, or any of the psalmists; not Daniel or any of the prophets; not the Maccabees or their noble-minded friends. All these had their fiery trials, and was it surprising that their successors should have them too?

We have *our* fiery trials; but is this surprising? A yet longer line of sufferers appears before *our* eyes, for we look back on the history of the apostles, confessors, martyrs, and reformers of the last eighteen centuries, and we see them all baptised with their Lord's baptism—a baptism of fire and blood. Is it, then, a strange thing that we should suffer? It is not strange, for we are only partakers of the sufferings of our Lord; and shall the disciple be above his Master? It is not strange; for no more bitter cup is put into our hands than was drunk by the saints of earlier and of later

[1] The word probably means—it is not happening to you by chance—*συμβαίνοντος*—but by the set purpose of God. See Bengel and Alford.

times. It is not strange; for we have been told expressly that they that will live godly must suffer persecution, and that through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom. It is not strange; for there yet remains a measure of suffering for the Church to fill up ere the day of final victory shall dawn. It is not strange; for by suffering we are to be perfected, and without it the old nature within us could not be mortified and slain.

No; it is not strange that any of us should suffer. On the contrary, exemption from suffering *would be strange,* for "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb. xii. 6). It is true that everyone is not called to sustain the same amount of suffering—to pass through a "*fiery trial,*" for God tempers the furnace to the earthen vessel or the gold, adjusting the heat as His servants are able to bear it; but it is the gold that is tried the most severely, and it is those whom He intends for the highest honours that He subjects to the severest ordeal.

Suffering is undoubtedly a profound mystery. But it is one of the factors in God's great plan of preparing His creatures, and especially man, for an eternity of painless joy. He does not inflict it upon them willingly. It is connected with sin, and is intended to counteract and to destroy its power. Even the holy angels, now confined in their abodes of bliss, must have experienced it in the midst of the great revolt against the government of God,

in which some of their companions engaged, and in which they fell. But it is one day to cease; for the whole creation, now so subject to it, is to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God; and, of the final heaven of the redeemed it is said that in it "there shall be no more pain" (Rom. viii. 21; Rev. xxi. 4).

II. IT IS A MATTER OF JOY. The Apostle goes further, and says, Be not astonished at the fiery trial which is to try you, *but rejoice;* for—

1. Ye are partakers of the sufferings of Christ.[1] His sufferings, which culminated in the cross, were borne for the glory of God, and for the good of the intelligent universe. All Christian sufferers drink of His cup, and are baptised with His baptism; and such an honour did St. Paul esteem this, that he said, "I count all things but dung, that I may know Christ, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death" (Phil. iii. 10). Does not the good soldier think it an honour to suffer with his commander in the field of battle? and does not fellowship in suffering bind men together in the closest bonds? You are a Christian sufferer; you are passing through a fiery trial; but it is in common with your Lord, and for the glory of His name. You bear His mark; you receive

[1] καθὸ, ver. 13, "denotes at once the reason and the measure of the suffering."—Fronmüller.

his stigma; you are signed with His cross. Go forth, then, exultingly, in His name, and shun no suffering which He may call you to endure. He will love you all the more for what you suffer for His sake; and you will love Him all the more for the trials through which you pass.

2. When He is revealed in glory you will be exceeding glad. Our Lord is now in glory, but it is at the Father's right hand, so that to His people on earth it is a hidden glory. There is no door open in heaven through which we can get even a glimpse of that glory, for indeed it would be more than we could bear (Rev. i. 17). But of Christ's glory there is to be a revelation. He is to return from heaven. He is to manifest Himself in the air. He is to appear the second time, but in the glory of His Father and of the holy angels. This was the subject of apostolic hopes, and hence the frequency with which the Apostles dwell on it. There is no theme on which they are so eloquent. It fills them with rapture. It entrances them with joy. And well it may. Nothing that has ever happened in the history of the world—in the history of the universe—is to be compared with this grand event. It will eclipse the glory of God's creative power, and even of Christ's redeeming love. It will be such a manifestation of the majesty of the triune God as even the angels themselves have never witnessed.

When that day comes Christ's suffering saints will exult

with joy.[1] The dead will rise from their graves, the living will be changed as in a moment, and both will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. iv. 16-18). The first resurrection will be a resurrection of the martyrs and of such as possessed the martyr-spirit—that is, of all who have suffered with Christ and for Him; whilst the change in the living will be of such only as are the Lord's at His coming. What rapture, then, will be theirs! With what gladness will they behold their glorified Redeemer! Such songs of triumph will then rend the skies as the universe has never heard or known, and all the previous sufferings of the martyr-throng will be forgotten in the tide of bliss in which they will that day float. Then will be heard the voice of a great multitude, saying, "Alleluia! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth! Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready" (Rev. xix. 6-7). And then will the Church of the firstborn sit down with Him at the royal banquet in one of the many mansions of His Father's house, and His banner over them will be everlasting love.

Thus will those who have been partners in the fight with the Son of God be partners in His coronation, and those who have suffered disgrace before the world will be exalted before God and His holy angels. Hence, as one

[1] ἵνα καὶ—that as ye now rejoice already in hope, ye may then also rejoice, and that *exulting*—χαρῆτε ἀγαλλιώμενοι. (cf. Chap. i. 8.)

has said, "The school of the cross is the school of heaven, for there is no way to heaven without the cross, heaven is opened on the cross, and the crown of the cross is in heaven."

3. To be reproached for Christ is, then, to be happy. Our version has "*for* the name of Christ,"[1] but literally the words are "in the name of Christ." Christians bear the name of Christ, the profession of His name, the character of His name, the dishonour of His name, and men reproach them for it, even as the unbelieving Jews blasphemed Christ's name itself (James ii. 7). But what then? the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon them. The spirit of glory is the Holy Spirit,[2] who is called also, here, the spirit of God. He rests upon the believer, even as He rested like a dove on the head of Jesus at His baptism; and thus resting He gives the seal of his adoption and the earnest of his inheritance above. St. Peter had in his mind the scene which was witnessed on the day of Pentecost, when "cloven tongues as of fire sat on the disciples, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts ii. 3, 4). And how often have believers in all ages been made partakers of the Holy Ghost in so rich a measure that He has not only rested upon them, but entered into and filled them with glory and with God! The world does

[1] ἐν ὀνόματι.

[2] The word *spirit* is implied in the first clause and expressed in the second.

not see the glory that rests on the believer for it is cognisable only by those who are themselves spiritually minded; yet sometimes, when it beholds the patience, and the meekness, and the fortitude he displays, it is compelled to confess that he has something in possession to which others are entire strangers.

The Apostle wrote from Babylon, where once the three Hebrew youths were cast into the furnace of fire, but were unhurt therein, because there was one with them like unto a Son of God. Did he remember this fact when he thus wrote? The Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; therefore you are safe, and have naught to fear; for He who was with *them* is now with *you*, and, ere long, you shall come forth unhurt, but pure.

The words "on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified," are omitted in several MSS., and are, probably, a gloss. If genuine they may mean that Christ by the world is evil spoken of, but on the part of Christians He is glorified; or, that the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of suffering, is the subject of its invectives, whilst on their part He is glorified for the consolations He imparts. The clause does not add much to the sense; for the main thought is, that reproached as Christians are for their Lord's sake, they are a happy people, and have no need to envy those whose enjoyments consist in the temporal pleasures of this fleeting life. If I want to find true happiness, I will not seek it in the homes of those who

have their portion in this life, and who despise and condemn Christ's humble followers; I will seek it rather among the disciples of the Man of Sorrows, whose lot is one of poverty, and whose name is a bye-word and a reproach.

III. IT IS ESSENTIAL, HOWEVER, THAT WE SUFFER AS CHRISTIANS.

1. Suffering is the lot of all. The murderer, the thief, the evil-doer, the busy-body in other men's matters, all suffer, and it would be a wonder if they did not. "See to it," says the Apostle, "that you do not suffer in company with them." But was it necessary to address such a caution to Christians? were *they* in danger of becoming such characters? Yes; for it must be remembered that many of them had but recently emerged out of the grossest heathenism, and had been addicted to the vilest sins (cf. Ephes. ii. 1-3). Now, sinful habits of long continuance are not uprooted all at once, but, until the old nature is impaled on the cross, will rise up again and strive for the mastery. Specially were the early Christians in danger of the last-named sin—that of prying into other men's matters. The word here used—ἀλλοτριοεπίσκοπος—occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and is not found in Greek writers. St. Peter appears to have coined it, but it is a very expressive word. It means one who inquires into things with which he has no concern—a busy-body, but a busy-body in other people's affairs. The early Christians were tempted to this evil by supposing that they were more enlightened than others, and

could give them good advice; but it is never well to intrude into matters which do not concern us, for we shall undoubtedly be told to mind our own business. Are Christians in our day out of all danger of being evil-doers and busy-bodies? Ministers and others have sometimes intermeddled with family affairs of the most delicate nature belonging to persons to whom they were comparatively strangers. Is it surprising that they should burn their fingers? If your advice is asked on other people's matters, give it, when you can, but do not interfere where your interference is not wanted, for otherwise you may plunge yourself into very great sorrow. There is no reward attached to suffering in itself, and in such suffering as we bring upon ourselves by our folly and indiscretion, we shall find few to sympathise with us or to take our part.

2. But to suffer as a Christian is a distinguished honour. "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch (Acts xi. 26)," and, whether by way of reproach or not, they adopted the name, and St. Peter glories in it here. The offence of the cross has not yet ceased even in our day, and there are men in the higher walks of human science and philosophy who still sneer at Christians and Christianity. Be it so; we can afford to bear all their contempt. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ," said the Apostle of the Gentiles, and all the sufferings which he and his fellow apostles bore were precious jewels in the sight of God, and prepared them for higher honours in the kingdom of their Lord.

Let no one, then, that suffers as a Christian be ashamed to suffer, but let him glorify God in this very name,[1] for it is the name of Christ, and to bear it with all the reproach connected with it is a greater honour than to possess all the titles and distinctions that the world can give. Let him not glory, however, in himself, nor in the possession of the name, but only in God, to whom all praise belongs. To be reproached for Christ's sake is, says one, not a *fiery* but an *airy* trial, and hence ought all who thus suffer to suffer patiently, with holy courage, and with fervent praise.

THOUGHTS OF OTHER MINDS.

Ver. 12. If the heathen think the behaviour of Christians strange, Christians need not be surprised if unbelievers persecute them on that account.—STEIGER.

Ver. 12. We must accept pain as a fact existing by a deep necessity, having its root in the essential order of the world. If we are to understand it, we must learn to look on it with different eyes. And does not a different thought suggest itself even while we recognise that the others fail? For if the reason and the end of pain lie beyond the results that have been mentioned, then they lie beyond the individual. Pain, if it exist for any purpose, and have any end or use—and of this what sufferer can endure to doubt?—must have some purpose which extends beyond the interests of the person who is called upon to bear it. For the ends which have been mentioned include all that concerns the individual himself. That which surpasses these rises into a larger than the individual sphere. From this ground it becomes evident again that to know the secret of our pains we must look beyond ourselves.—HOWARD HINTON.

Ver. 12. In these fires, as faith is tried, the word on which faith relies

[1] ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τούτῳ is now the generally accepted reading.

is tried, and is found *all gold*, most precious, no refuse in it. The truth and sweetness of the promises are much confirmed in the Christian's heart upon his experiment of them in his sufferings; his God is found to be as good as His word, being with him when he goes through the fire (Isa. xliii. 2), preserving him that he loses nothing except dross, which is a gainful loss, leaving only his corruption behind him.—LEIGHTON.

Ver. 14. Like as our secular princes distinguish faithful and constant servants and victorious generals with the badge of some order, so the Lord of Lords distinguishes His faithful servants and victors with crosses of suffering in order to prepare them a joy, as with a cross of honour and a token, and assured expectation of the great honour that, as those who with Christ continue patient in suffering, they shall be blessed hereafter with joy and gladness, when at His second, and even at His third coming, He shall reveal the glory of his power, and raise them to participation in the glory of His kingdom.—ZELLER.

Ver. 15. It is but one word in the original (meaning), as bishops in another's diocese, as pryers into other men's matters, as pragmatical persons that meddle with other men's concernments, without cause or call. It is not suffering for evil-doing, but suffering for well-doing, that carries the crown (2 Tim. ii. 12). It is not just, but unjust suffering, that hath the recompense of reward annexed to it (1 Pet. iii. 14, and iv. 14). It is not sufferers for the evil of sin, nor sufferers of the evil of sin; but sufferers of the evil of punishment, for the avoiding of the evil of sin, whose cause is good.—BROOKS.

XVIII.

THE TIME OF VISITATION.

"For the time (is come) for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if (it) first (begin) at us, what will the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved where shall the ungodly and (the) sinner appear? Wherefore let them also that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls in well-doings unto a faithful Creator."—(Chap. iv. 17-19.*)*

THE prophet Ezekiel, in one of his remarkable visions, saw a man with a writer's inkhorn by this side, who was commanded to go and to set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sighed and cried for the abominations that were done in the midst of Jerusalem. After him others were commanded to go with weapons of slaughter in their hands, and it was said to them, "Slay utterly old and young, both maids and little children, and women; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary" (ch. ix. 4-6). It is more than probable that St. Peter had this passage in view when he wrote the words now before us. His language, too, is in accordance with a general opinion entertained by the Jews that God "never punishes the world because of the wicked but He always begins with the righteous first."

A new reason is here introduced why Christians should suffer gladly for their Lord's sake. He will deliver them

from the terrible judgments which are about to burst on the ungodly, and their souls will find rest in God, to whom they commit themselves as to a faithful Creator.

I. THE VISITATION OF JUDGMENT. "For the time is come," etc.

1. Its beginning. "It must begin at the house of God." The Church is His house, represented under the Jewish economy by the temple of Jerusalem, of which God said, "This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it" (Ps. cxxxii. 14). But it became polluted, and must needs be cleansed. How often had judgment begun at that temple! and now it was to begin there again, for the time of its destruction was at hand, when, as it was too late to cleanse it, it must be swept away, and Jerusalem trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles were fufilled. When the Apostle thus wrote, the city and temple were still standing; but he saw, in the distance, the approach of those armies of which the Lord Jesus had spoken (Matt. xxiv. 15), and he knew that a visitation was at hand more terrible than the nation had ever known.

But this was not all he meant, for he speaks here of the house of God as the Christian Church, "if it first begin *at us*." The visitation would affect the believers of that day, "that being judged, they might be chastened of the Lord, and not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. xi. 32). It is so still. God begins His judgments with the righteous,

that His house may be purged from all defilement, that each heart He sanctifies may be made pure of sin. He sends them at the right time, but they usually alight, in the first instance, on the Christian Church ; and how often it has been visited, in one locality or another, with the most terrible siftings of the chaff from the wheat, its history from the beginning gives the clearest proof. Are not His judgments pending now ? Is not the time at hand for some other fearful display of God's anger with the nations ? And on whom will it first fall but on apostate and unfaithful Churches, and on hypocritical and deceitful men ? And even the righteous will feel the blow, though on them it will fall as a chastisement to bring them nearer to their Lord ; for only by such means will they be purified and made white, and prepared for the kingdom of eternal rest. Let us be in readiness for the coming judgment. Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. Let us make our hearts (God's private closets) the abodes of holiness and love ; for then, if we do not wholly escape His judgments, they will be comparatively light, and, in the midst of the most terrible calamities, we shall be kept in peace.

2. Its progress. "If it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that *obey* not the Gospel of God?" The greatest of all sins is disobedience to the Gospel, the neglect of its offers of grace and salvation, and the despising that Saviour whom it proclaims to men. Thousands both of

Jews and Gentiles were guilty of this sin in the days of the Apostle. They put away from them eternal life; they counted the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing. And it lies at the door of millions of our race to-day. The Gospel, the good news of pardon and eternal life, has reached their ears, but they have despised and rejected it, and have put themselves in an attitude of hostility to the righteous claims of heaven. Oh, it does seem a fearful insult to God to disobey the gospel of His grace! and can we wonder if His judgment fall on such with overwhelming power? If the sons are chastised what have the rebels to expect? On the guilty nations of heathendom who have never heard the gospel, and have therefore rejected only the light of nature and of conscience, God's judgments repeatedly fall; but they fall more terribly by far on Christian nations, so-called, who, like many of those of modern Europe, have had the Gospel, but have rejected it for Popery, or rationalism, or infidelity, and let their history testify whether God's anger has not fallen on them repeatedly with tremendous power. Is not war one of God's sore judgments? and has it not devastated nearly every country of the Continent within the last half century? And alas! the end is not yet. Men will not now obey the Gospel of God; and to-day He whets His glittering sword, and is preparing the vials of His wrath to be poured out upon them to the uttermost. Europe just now is like a huge volcano, the

fires of which may burst out at any time; and certain it is that a great conflict is impending, and that God, ere long, will do a thing among the nations "at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle" (1 Sam. iii. 11). And when the nations are visited individuals cannot escape. The sin of rejecting the Gospel is never a national, but it is also a personal sin; and will any who are guilty of it be excused? Men there are who disobey it on intellectual grounds, affirming that they have not sufficient evidence of its truth, or that it contradicts the teachings of science and philosophy. But unbelief is a sin of the heart, for "if any man will do God's will," said Christ, "he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God" (John vii. 17). Not with impunity, then, shall any one, on any grounds whatever, disobey the Gospel of God. It is not man's gospel but His, and it demands of everyone who hears it implicit obedience, whilst it holds over all who refuse to obey it, the judgment of condemnation from which there can be no escape.

3. Its results. "And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" This is a repetition of the former question, being a quotation from Prov. xi. 31, which in our version is—"Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth; much more the wicked and the sinner:" but the Septuagint version agrees with this. The righteous are saved with difficulty. In consequence of the severity of the trial and their own weakness,

they barely escape the judgments of the Most High. Speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, our Lord said, "Then let them which be in Judea flee to the mountains," etc. "And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter" (Matt. xxiv. 16-20); and it is said that, when that terrible judgment came, the Christians fled with haste to the little city, Pella, where they escaped the general overthrow with difficulty.

When God visits the nations, even His elect people suffer; and when the final judgment comes, they will have no righteousness to spare,—no works of supererogation to apply to others, no oil in their vessels to sell to those whose lamps have gone out. Some, no doubt, will be more than conquerors, and will have administered unto them an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom (Rom. viii. 37, 2 Pet. i. 11); but there will be many who will be saved as by fire—hardly saved, as Lot was saved out of Sodom and the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt. Think you that it is possible to be over-righteous? Such was not St. Paul's view, when he said—"if *by any means* I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead;" and the holiest of men, when they come to die, feel that they have nothing of their own in which to trust, but can only rest on the merits of their Lord and Saviour.

But if so, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? The ungodly are those who care not for God; sinners are those who make a trade of sin; but the two characters are

one, and oh! what will be their doom? They must appear somewhere; but how, and where? *Where*, in the day when God visits the nations, and sweeps away the chaff before the breath of His indignation? *where*, in the hour when death claims them as his prey, and hurries them into the presence of the searcher of all hearts? *where*, in the final judgment of the quick and dead, when the Lord Jesus is revealed to take vengeance on them that obey not His Gospel? Oh! *where* shall they appear—the mockers, the triflers, the pleasure-seekers, the misers, the haters of God, the half-hearted, the hypocrites—*where* shall they appear? They will call to the rocks and to the mountains to fall upon them and to hide them from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, but in vain, and to no purpose; and dragged into His presence by the angels of vengeance, He will say: "Those mine enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before Me" (Luke xix. 27). But will annihilation, then, be their doom? Alas, no! but they shall go away into everlasting punishment, and it will be said of them, "He that is unjust let him be unjust still, and he that is filthy let him be filthy still" (Rev. xxii. 11).

II. THE LESSON TO BELIEVERS drawn from these facts.

1. The exhortation is addressed to those who suffer according to the will of God. "Let them also," says the Apostle, or "them especially," as he, perhaps, means.

The dispensation of God's people now is one of suffering. He calls them to suffer. They suffer by His will. Some of their sufferings result from the malice of the wicked one, as did Job's; and some from the folly or the cruelty of men, as did those of the martyrs of the Church; but these are permitted by the will of God, and beyond His will none of the enemies of His people can go. But others are inflicted by Himself, as are many of the diseases to which they are subject in common with the human race, and as are the trials consequent on the judgments that fall on the nations, and from which they could be exempt only by miracle. It is, however, their joy to know that they never suffer but when God wills, and that He will not always chide, nor lay upon them more than they are able to bear. Are you God's sufferers? He lets you suffer here that you may be prepared for a richer kingdom and a brighter crown, and, meanwhile, you have lucid intervals—seasons of repose and rest; and when the suffering returns, as oft it does, there comes with it new patience, fortitude, and strength, and you are assured that all things are working together for your good.

2. What, then, is the lesson, or what are such sufferers to do? "Commit," says the Apostle, "the keeping[1] of your souls to Him in well-doing." Each of us has in possession a soul—a spirit, which is the seat of intelligence, thought,

[1] The word παρατίθημι does not mean here simply to commit, but to deposit in charge. See, on the word, Liddell and Scott.

and will; and which though yesterday it existed not, is destined for immortality, and can never die. Who can estimate the value of his soul? What arithmetic can compute its worth? Now those who have had entrusted to their care precious gems or large sums of money for which they must hereafter give account, are usually anxious to find a place of custody where they may put them away out of the reach of robbers, or where they may be used to advantage, and bring in some interest. With whom can you commit the keeping of your souls? Can you keep them yourselves? Can you entrust them with your fellow-men? Nay; can you confide them into the hands of an angel? I know that there are men who set themselves up as the custodians of souls—priests of Rome—and some elsewhere, who will tell you to give up your intellect, your judgment, and your will to them, and that they will be responsible for your final salvation. Dare you do it? No; you dare not, and you will not. Souls are safely kept only by Him who made and who redeemed them, and in His hands you must place them, never daring to resume the treasure. The only hiding-place and home of the soul is God—the munition of rocks, and when you are there you will know that you are safe, and will rest as a child in its mother's arms.

But how must this be done? "In well-doings,"[1] says the

[1] Acts of *αγαθοποιΐα*, as contrasts to the opposite acts, in verse 15.—*Alford.*

Apostle, for the word is in the plural; and we have only the warrant to commit our souls to God's keeping when we obey implicitly His holy will. The act of committing them to Him is an act of faith, but we can only exercise that faith when standing on the platform of entire obedience. Has the rebel any right to fly to his sovereign for succour when the foe is at his heels? But merely ceasing to do evil is not enough: we must learn to do well. Our lives must be spent in well-doing, in acts of charity, self-sacrifice, and devotedness to God's will, and then shall we be able to commit our souls into His hands through Christ our Lord; and, doing it in life, we shall do it also in death, saying with our Lord Himself, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

3. The encouragement to do this arises from the fact that He is "a faithful Creator."[1] All souls are His. He made them for Himself and for His own glory. Man's body was formed out of the dust of the earth, but God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul," so that the soul came immediately from Himself. And He is not only its Creator, but its new Creator, which is here specially meant; for man having fallen from his original estate has been redeemed by the blood and sanctified by the spirit of the Son of God; and can God be unfaithful to the promises He has given to His people? He represents Himself to them as their refuge, their hiding-place, their shield, and their pavilion; and He

[1] The word ὡς—*as unto*, is omitted by nearly all editors.

bids them trust in Him at all times, assuring them that in life and in death He will be their portion and their God; and can He fail to fulfil His word? can He fail to keep that which they have committed to His care?

As a faithful Creator, He will preserve them from the contamination and power of sin, for "He is able to keep them from falling, and to present them spotless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24).

As a faithful Creator He will watch over them in the time of special danger, for the promise is: "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell on the earth" (Rev. iii. 10).

As a faithful Creator He will uphold them as they cross the billows of affliction, for "Though I walk through the valley and shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they shall comfort me" (Ps. xxiii. 4).

And as a faithful Creator He will acknowledge them as His own on the great day, and will receive them to Himself; for "He that overcometh the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels" (Rev. iii. 5).

These are the promises of the Lord Jesus; for *He* is the faithful Creator, and into His hands we are to commit the keeping of our souls; for "by Him were all things created, and by Him all things consist."

XIX.

EXHORTATIONS TO THE ELDERS.

"The elders, therefore, which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory which is about to be revealed. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight (thereof), not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind: neither as being lords over God's portions, but becoming examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the amaranthine crown of glory."—(Chap. v. 1-4*).*

THE last chapter of this invaluable Epistle seems to take up the word with which the former ended, and to exhort various classes of persons to such "well-doings" as became their positions in the Church. The practical vein which runs through the Apostle's letter is remarkably conspicuous here, whilst the hope, of which it speaks so often, is also prominent, and indicates that St. Peter wrote or dictated the whole Epistle at one time and in the same exalted frame of mind.

In the passage now before us we have an elder speaking to elders, and have, therefore, to mark what the elder says of himself, and what exhortations he gives to them.

I. THE ELDER—St. Peter. "Elders which are among you I, therefore,[1] exhort, who am also an elder, or literally, "the fellow-elder." He did not, then, affirm that he was

[1] οὖν inserted by many, connects the exhortation with what goes before.

the prince or chief of the Apostles, or claim the right to lord it over the Church as if he were its visible head on earth. His pretended successors have often done this, and Pope Pius IX. has affirmed his infallibility; and, in virtue of it, has denounced, in no measured terms, all who refuse to submit to his authority. And is *he* the successor of the gentle Peter, who can launch his invectives against kings and governments with the most perfect self-complacency? He has been called the modern Jove, and certainly, as far as the power belongs to him, he has hurled on society thunderbolts innumerable, which, however, for the most part, are a voice and nothing else. He is rebuked by this Epistle, for instead of assuming such a high prerogative as *he* assumes, St. Peter places himself on a level with the elders of the Church, and addresses them only as one of themselves, and with all the tenderness and affection of a brother.[1] He bases his exhortations on these grounds:

1. That he is a fellow-elder. Called to the Apostleship by the Lord Jesus, and filled with the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, he rejoiced to give himself this significant title. The word "elder"—presbyter—is first found in

[1] It is true that our Lord gave to Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. xvi. 19), and that kingdom he opened, instrumentally, on the day of Pentecost to the Jews (Acts ii. 41); and in the house of Cornelius to the Gentiles (Acts x. 44); but of any superiority over the rest of the Apostles he never speaks, and as for handing down the power of the keys to a successor, it never entered his mind. See on the subject Dr. Thos. Jackson's works, Vol. II. p. 351, etc., Oxford edit., and Archbishop Whateley's *Kingdom of Christ*, page 102, etc.

Exod. iii. 16-18, where it is applied to the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, but afterwards also to the seventy who were chosen from among the able men who feared God to assist in the oversight of the people (Exod. xviii. 24, xxiv. 9; Num. xi. 16). They were not priests in any sense of the term. Their functions were not sacerdotal, but governmental, and they "judge the people at all seasons." In the New Testament the term is applied to church officers generally, but, in particular, to pastors and teachers (Acts xii. 30, xv. 2, 4, xxi. 18; 1 Tim. v. 17). Sometimes they are called bishops *(episcopoi)* or overseers (Acts xx. 17, 28; Phil. i. 7; 1 Tim. iii. 17, 18; Tit. i. 5, 7), and hence no candid mind will deny that in the days of the Apostles bishops and presbyters were officially the same. What right, then, have ministers of any class to assert that, because they were episcopally ordained, they and they only are authorised ministers of Christ? The claim is altogether unfounded, and the dogma of the apostolical succession finds no countenance from the Word of God. All sacerdotal pretensions are founded upon this dogma, and are, therefore, equally unscriptural, and the time must come when this bane of Christendom—for such it is—will be swept away, and when all Christian ministers will be recognised, if personally worthy of it, as equally in possession of authority both to preach the Gospel and to administer the sacraments which our Lord ordained.

St. Peter was an Apostle, but he writes to the elders as

one of themselves, and of his apostolical authority says nothing here. "As a brother in office he rightly exhorts his brethren." And thus he would doubtless win their confidence, and they would receive his exhortations with the greater joy. If ministers wish to benefit others, they must themselves be humble, condescending to address them in the gentlest manner, and becoming all things to all men, if only they may gain some. Specially, when speaking to their brethren in the ministry, ought they to speak as addressing equals; for to threaten they have no right, and to exalt themselves above others who occupy the same office would be unseemly and unchristian in the eyes of all.

2. He addresses them further as *a witness*—μάρτυς—of Christ's sufferings. He was with Him in the garden and beheld something of His agony. He saw Him betrayed by Judas and led away to the bar. He himself had added to His grief by his unfaithfulness in the hour of trial; and perhaps he stood in the distance as Jesus was lifted up upon the cross. Oh! could he ever forget those scenes? No; they were indelibly fixed on his memory, and his recollection of them was more vivid as months and years rolled on. But he was not merely a spectator of them, but a witness-bearer, which is here the meaning of the word. What a noble testimony he bore to the sufferings of Christ on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 22), in the temple of Jerusalem (iii. 15), and before the presence of the council (iv. 8). His testimony cost him his liberty, and almost his

life (Acts xii. 1-5), but *on* he went in his grand career, repeating it with boldness and in the face of the fiercest persecution, until the end came. "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me," said the risen Saviour to His disciples, and witnesses they became, bearing the testimony of a holy life, of a living ministry, and of a triumphant death. They overcame the accuser of the brethren by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death (Rev. xii. 11). And now we are compassed about by a great cloud of witnesses, or martyrs, for to the Old Testament saints, who were witnesses for God under their dispensation, have been added innumerable witnesses for the Son of God, who for His sake endured a great fight of affliction, but gained the victory and won the crown (Heb. xii. 1). St. Peter himself is one of the noble army of martyrs now before the throne, and the words of this Epistle come to us, therefore, signed, as it were, with his own blood, and bearing the impress of a finished course. Let all Christian elders, all Christian presbyters, ponder them with this fact in view, and let them give to these impressive exhortations the more patient and earnest heed. When a man has suffered and died for the cause for which he pleads, we may be sure that he is in earnest, and such a man deserves attention, even if his cause be false. But when it is true, and when we hear other evidence of its truth which cannot be gainsaid, as is the case with each witness for Christ, we are bound to give

him, not our attention only, but our confidence and trust, and to accept his testimony with joyful hearts.

3. St. Peter speaks, further, as *a partaker* of the glory that should follow. "Whither I go thou canst not follow Me now," said Jesus to him on one occasion, "but thou shalt follow me hereafter" (John xiii. 36). He was to follow his Lord to the cross, but afterwards to the throne, for the Saviour's prayer for His disciples was "that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me" (John xvii. 14), and His promise was "ye shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

A partaker of the sufferings of Christ, this great Apostle was already, and a partaker of His glory also; whilst he anticipated a far larger measure of His glory when his work was done. And what that glory was he knew, in part, from the vision which he saw in the holy mount, when his Lord was transfigured before him, and the majesty of His Divine nature burst through the garment of His flesh. "It is good to be here," said Peter, on that occasion, and he never forgot that prelibation of the future. He mentions it distinctly in the second Epistle (i. 17), and perhaps he alludes to it here also. He partook, for awhile at least, of his Saviour's glory there, as did Moses of God's glory when with Him on Mount Sinai. But it was only a foretaste of the glory yet to be revealed, and to that glory the Apostle had respect as the grand reward of all his labours and his sufferings here. The hope of it animates all true believers,

who are "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that they suffer with Him that they be also glorified together" (Rom. viii. 17). Glorified with Christ! actual partakers of the glory He now has with the Father! Is this to be the nature of our future being? Yes; whatever else heaven is, it will be this—glory—the glory of the glorified Son of Man, the transformation of our souls and bodies into His likeness, never to be lost through the ages of eternity.

II. TO THE ELDERS. "I exhort elders which are among you," says the Apostle, and very remarkable the exhortation is:

1. Observe its import: "Feed the flock of God which is among you." These elders had been appointed to their office in the several localities to which this Epistle was sent; some, perhaps, by St. Paul, others, perhaps, by Timothy, and others, it may be, by St. Peter himself. In their immediate regions, or parishes, as we should call them, flocks had been gathered, churches had been formed, over each of which one or more pastors had been ordained. The Apostle reminds them that the flock is not theirs, but God's. All souls are His, created by His power, and redeemed by His grace, and, therefore, the property, not of man, but of Himself, who has a far higher interest in them than any created being can ever have. Let Christian ministers of every rank remember this. Their people are God's people; their flocks are God's flocks; their churches

are God's churches; of which they themselves are not independent, but of which they form a part. To each bishop, overseer, or shepherd, God speaks in the person of His Son—the Chief Shepherd, and says, "I have ordained you over this flock; but it is mine, not yours, and I shall one day require at your hand an account of every individual sheep or lamb, see to it that none of them are lost!" How tremendous, then, the responsibility of a minister of Christ! Who is sufficient for these things?

St. Peter's words are evidently a reminiscence of St. Paul's to the elders of the Church at Ephesus: "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts xx. 28). By both the Apostles the same word is here used—*feed* or *tend* the flock; and both, also, speak of *oversight*. What, then, are the special duties of elders? To lead their people into the green pastures of the word of God, and beside the quiet waters of eternal truth; to guard them against the poisonous weeds of error, which spring up almost everywhere; to look after them that they do not wander from the fold, and become the prey of the lion or the wolf; and to go before them, in every step setting them an example of obedience to the voice of the Chief Shepherd. Ministers who fail in any of these duties will be deemed unfaithful shepherds; yet how many such there have been, and how many such there are

to-day! God complained of the shepherds of Israel (Ezek. xxxiv. 10). He has reason to complain of many of the shepherds of the Christian Church. Yet, blessed be His name, He has raised up, and is still raising, up many thousands who shun not to preach, to warn, to suffer, and whose one aim is to present their flocks with joy to the Shepherd and Lord of all in the great day.

2. But the spirit of this duty must also be observed: "not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock." There have been persons called to the office of the ministry, yet so unwilling to enter it that they have had to be persuaded, nay, constrained to do so; whilst others have been in too great haste, and have run before they were sent. When God calls men to the work, they are bound to obey, and to obey willingly, and not because they must. Willingly, too, and not by constraint, must they fulfil the duties of the sacred office; and, as far as in them lies, pursue them with alacrity and joy. O how sad it is to see a Christian minister discharging his functions as if he would rather be engaged in some secular pursuit! And still more sad is it when men have no higher motive than sordid gain, when they preach only for filthy lucre's sake. One who is set apart to the office of the ministry has a right to expect such support from his flock as they are able to give; "For the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that

treadeth out the corn," and "the labourer is worthy of his reward" (1 Tim. v. 18); but for a Christian minister to desire riches and to be covetous of a large salary, and to live the life of a courtier rather than that of a shepherd of the sheep, is a violation of the vows which he took upon himself when he entered on his sacred work. The word here rendered lucre does not mean *maintenance*, but *base gain*,[1] and he who is prompted by the desire of it is no true minister of Christ, nor will he be of a ready mind for his work, or enthusiastic in the pursuit of it, for having got the fleece, he will care but little for the flock.

Further, Christian ministers are to be rulers over God's heritage, but not overrulers. "The kings of the Gentiles," said Christ to his disciples, "exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors; but ye shall not be so; but he that is greatest among you let him be as the younger, and he that is chief as he that doth serve" (Luke xxii. 25, 26). The word rendered "heritage" here means "portions," that is, of the flock of Christ, or the *cure* committed to their charge. Shall a Christian minister act as if he were the master of his people, domineering over them in a spirit of ostentation, as if glorying in his power, or as if he thought them inferior to himself? No; he must rule by *example*, says the Apostle, not by dictatorial words. It is, perhaps, more difficult to govern a church meekly than it is to

[1] αἰσχροκερδῶς—sordidly greedy of gain.

preach and expound the word of God. The most difficult position which a pastor has to occupy is not the pulpit, but the vestry; for there he has to guide the affairs of the church, and there, perhaps, to exercise godly discipline. What wisdom, what patience, what humility are necessary to rule well in meeting of the deacons or church-officers by whom a minister is surrounded! Those only who are behind the scenes know how all his Christian graces are often tried to the uttermost, and how, then especially, he is liable to overrule, or to exercise lordship over his flock. Let him be on his guard, and keep his temper; and, whilst holding the reins of his office, and by no means letting them go, let him be mild, gentle, and forbearing, presenting to everyone a pattern of meekness and of love.

A true shepherd guides his sheep and does not drive them. But what then shall be said of the boasted successor of St. Peter who, on the 18th of July, 1870, proclaimed himself infallible in the presence of the so-called Vatican Council, and has ever since been hurling his anathemas on all who dare to deny his infallibility. Is not this lording it over God's heritage? Well, the end will come, and Rome's domineering voice will, ere long, be silent in the dust. *The* man of sin, if not yet actually revealed, will doubtless be a Pope of Rome, and that declaration of infallibility was but another step in the development of the mystery of iniquity. And now it may not be long ere the last exhibition of the

arrogance of the Pope is witnessed, when he shall sit in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God, "Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming" (2 Thess. ii. 8). What a contrast with what follows here:—

3. The reward promised to the faithful elders—"And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." When we remember the conversation that passed between Peter and his Lord by the lake of Tiberias after His resurrection from the dead, when Jesus gave back to Peter his commission, and said to him, "Feed my sheep" (John xxi. 15, 48), we shall not be surprised that he should give to Him this title—"the Chief Shepherd," which is even more expressive than the "Great Shepherd" (Heb. xiii. 20). It involves the Divine origin of the pastoral office, and it implies that Christ is not a shepherd among shepherds, but *the* Shepherd from whom all others receive their authority, and to whose jurisdiction they are all amenable. To Him who gave His life for the sheep all Christian pastors are responsible, and from His lips they will receive their just award. The heavens have received Him until the times of the restitution of all things; but He will one day appear in majesty and glory, and then will the faithful under-shepherds receive from His own hands a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Instead of sordid gain and empty honour there will be enduring gain and honour that abides. The word

is an *amaranthine crown*, in contrast to the crowns which were made of flowers, laurel, and olive leaves, and which were placed on the heads of the victors in the Grecian and other games, but which lasted only for a day. This crown is the "crown of righteousness" (2 Tim. iv. 8), the "crown of life" (James i. 12, Rev. ii. 10), and here it is called a crown of *glory*.[1] It will be a glorious crown, even the glory of Christ Himself of which the whole nature of the faithful elders will partake (Phil. iii. 21); but which will be specially prominent on the head. On the head of Christ are many crowns, and especially the double crown as the priest king of His people (Zech. vi. 11); and I believe that faithful ministers will be distinguished by a special brightness that shall surround their heads by which they will be known among the hosts of heaven. Each believer shall have his crown; but "they that be wise shall shine as the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. xii. 3). There is a higher stage of blessedness in the life to come reserved for Christian teachers and pastors; and each one's crown shall vary in brightness according to the measure of his fidelity and zeal. As there are stars of different magnitudes, so shall there be saints of different degrees of glory, for every one shall receive his reward according to his life and works.

[1] *τὸν ἀμαράντινον τῆς δόξης στέφανον.* This crown will not be given until the great day (Cf. 2 Tim. iv. 8). The redeemed in heaven have already the white robe and the palm, but not the crown (Rev. vii. 9, 14).

But there will be no envy among the crowned ones. Each will know that the measure of his glory is a right and just one, and each will rejoice both in his own reward and in the rewards of others. Such men as Peter, and Paul, and John, among the Apostles; and such men as Luther, and Knox, and Wesley, among the great teachers of the Church, will shine with peculiar lustre among the redeemed. But, just as we rejoice in their noble and devoted labours now, shall we all rejoice in their distinguished blessedness hereafter. Not all, however, who obtain the highest positions in the Church on earth, will necessarily be found in the highest positions in heaven. How many obtain honours to which they are not entitled, whilst others, who have laboured with equal diligence and zeal, are comparatively forgotten. What reverses there will be when the Chief Shepherd comes? The brightest crowns will be given to those who are really worthy of them, and many a pastor who has laboured in an obscure village, and many a missionary who has toiled under a burning sun, will then be deemed worthy of more notice and honour than some who have dwelt in mansions and have rolled in the abundance of their wealth.

THOUGHTS OF OTHER MINDS.

Ver. 1. This Epistle does not yet refer to different offices in the Church. We have before us the most simple form of Church-constitution, under which all other offices were as yet included in the Apostolate and the Presbyterate. As in ch. ii. 25, the Lord is called the Shepherd

and Bishop (overseer) of the Church, so the elders were to continue under Him these His functions, that is, on the one hand to teach and exhort, and to arrange Divine worship, and on the other to take care that all things should be done honestly and orderly, to administer the discipline and to provide for the support of the poor.—FRONMULLER.

Ver. 1. *A partaker*, etc. This illustrious destiny, however, so far from separating him in fact or in feeling from the humble elders to whom he wrote, is mentioned for the sake of conciliating the greater confidence in his counsels, as of "one that had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful," and as a guarantee of his community of interests with them, and of their future and everlasting union with himself, if they too, in their several spheres of duty and trial, were found following him, as he followed Christ.—LILLIE.

Ver. 3. Ministers must *preach.* Reading is of great use, but there's no small difference between the same and preaching; when the Word is only read, people neither understand it, nor have they power or will to apply it to themselves. Reading is as a rich and costly garment folded up; preaching, when it is open and held out by the four corners. In reading, we see it full of majesty; but when it is unfolded by preaching, we wonder at so much matter in so few words. Reading is as the whole loaf, preaching as the cutting of it in pieces, where every man hath his portion divided. It is as the cracking of the nut, and finding out the kernel. This difference will appear plainly by comparing the knowledge and practice of those which live under those which are only readers, with theirs which live under faithful and diligent preachers.—ROGERS.

Ver. 4. O ye heavenly-minded, diligent, self-denying pastors after God's own heart, whether ye be in the *Church* established by the *State*, or in those *divisions* widely separated from or *nearly* connected with it, take courage; preach Jesus; press through all difficulties in the faith of your God; fear no evil while meditating nothing but good. Ye are stars in the right hand of Jesus, who walks among your golden candlesticks, and has lighted that lamp of life which ye are appointed to trim; fear not, *your* labour in the Lord cannot be in vain!—DR. A. CLARKE.

XX.

COUNSELS TO THE YOUNGER.

"In like manner, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elders; yea, all (of you) be clothed with humility one towards another, because God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time; casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He careth for you"—(*Chap.* v. 5-7).

It is almost essential to the prosperity of a Christian church that it should possess a number of young people in its fold. The elders die or become enfeebled by age, so that a church composed entirely, or even chiefly, of such will soon become extinct. It is, therefore, always gratifying to a minister, when he stands in the midst of his congregation, to observe that a large portion of it consists of children and young persons; and to these he will pay special attention, and, whilst not forgetting the older people, will be careful to give wise and suitable counsel to the younger, remembering that they are his hope for the future, when the aged of his flock lie numbered with the dead.

St. Peter is an example to Christian ministers in this, as in many other respects. Having given wise counsel to the elders, he now turns to the younger members of the Churches, and says, "Likewise ye younger;" for Jesus had said unto him, "Feed my lambs." The elders, as we have seen, were the presbyters of the Church, who, gene-

rally speaking, were seniors in age; the younger are not, as some have supposed, persons who assisted them in their daily ministrations, but the junior members of the Church in general, or the rest of the Church as opposed to the presbyters. But in the exhortations now given the Apostle includes all others: "yea, all of you," he says, and what follows applies to all—namely, submission, humility, and trust in God.

I. SUBMISSION. "Likewise, ye young, submit yourselves unto the elders; yea, all of you, be subject one to another."

1. The younger are to submit to the elders. The elders, or presbyters of a Church, are appointed to the office on the ground of their superior knowledge and experience. Age is not always a sign of wisdom, and hence, though for awhile Elihu listened to the three friends of Job because they were older than he, saying "days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom," yet, when he found that they were in error, he ventured at length "to shew" his "opinion" (Job xxxii. 4-7). But the ministers of a Christian Church ought to be men of judgment and discretion, capable of giving advice to their flock, and worthy of being trusted in by all their people. Happy the Church who has wise elders, experienced teachers, faithful pastors, to whom the young especially can look up, and in whose counsel they can implicitly confide. To such it is not only their duty but their privilege to submit; hence the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says also, "Obey

them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account" (ch. xiii. 17); and to accept their spiritual counsel, especially in times of perplexity and trouble, is almost sure to conduce to considerable profit. This, however, does not imply, as the Church of Rome teaches, that the people are to have no judgment of their own, but blindly to follow the directions of their priests, as if they were the infallible mouthpieces of God. To make another, whatever his pretensions to authority may be, the keeper of your conscience, is to imperil your salvation and to rob the Holy Spirit of the glory which is due to Him alone, as the one teacher whom Christ promised to every believer in His name. Seek by prayer and the study of the word of God, the guidance of the Spirit; and then, if you have a pastor after God's own heart, submit yourself to him in all things which are right, even as the traveller submits to his practised guide as he is journeying over a rugged and dangerous path. Are you young in years, or in the experience of the Christian life? be not self-opiniated or wise in your own conceit, but be willing to receive the advice of your superiors; and do not criticise your ministers, but listen to them with all teachableness of mind.

2. All are to be subject one to another.[1] This duty St.

[1] But the word "be subject"—ὑποτασσόμενοι—is omitted by most editors, who read, be clothed with, or gird on humility, one towards another. This, however, implies subjection, and the two things must go hand in hand.

enforces in language such as this, "be [illegible] to another with brotherly love; in [illegible] one another" Rom. xii. 10. "Subject one to another in the fear of God." [illegible] Let nothing be done through strife or [illegible] lowliness of mind let each esteem other [illegible] ves" (Phil. ii. 3). There can be little [illegible] had these words of his brother Apostle [illegible] pondered this passage; whilst he thought [illegible] words, "Whosoever will be great among [illegible] your minister; and whosoever will be chief [illegible] be your servant" (Matt. xxi. 26-27). [illegible] subject to their husbands, children to their [illegible] to their masters, and, in a certain sense, [illegible] When the members of a Christian Church are [illegible] stand up for their individual rights, as they call [illegible] and not yield to one another even in the smallest [illegible] there can be nothing among them but strife and [illegible] but, as in the bosom of a family, so in the [illegible] Church, it is pleasant to see the members giving [illegible] in abeyance, as far as they can, their own [illegible] and their own will, when thus they can promote [illegible] good. Mutual subjection, in the fear of God, [illegible] be, if we would have harmony and peace; and [illegible] of it opportunities will occur every day, [illegible] the slightest interference with individual [illegible] in the grand essentials of the faith.

II. HUMILITY. "And be clothed," or rather, "clothe yourselves with humility."

1. Humility is a garment to be put on. The word here rendered "be clothed," is a very expressive one, being derived from κομβός, a string or band, with which a garment is fastened to the person, so that humility is to be put on as an outer dress to ornament the wearer; and *to be kept on*, because tied in knots, and not merely to be worn on certain occasions. And what garment is more beautiful than humility? It is not a garish dress, put on to attract attention, a dress of many colours designed to win the admiration of others. It is a modest dress, pure and white, keeping the owner in the background, whilst his Lord and Saviour is considered all in all. Its possessor does not cringe to human opinion, or submit to be trodden under foot of others; yet before God he deems himself as nothing, and is willing to lie in the very dust before Him.

> Pride is the livery of the prince of darkness,
> Worn by his slaves, who glory in their shame;
> A gaudy dress, but tarnished, rent, and foul,
> And loathsome to the holy eye of heaven.
> But sweet humility, a shiny robe,
> Bestowed by heaven upon its favoured sons;
> The robe which God approves and angels wear,
> Fair semblance of the glorious Prince of Light,
> Who stooped to dwell (Divine humility!)
> With sinful worms, and poverty, and scorn.

Heathenism knew nothing of humility. It deemed it a mean and contemptible thing to submit to others and

voluntarily to take a lowly place. But Christianity, setting before its disciples the example of their Lord, who humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, says to them, "Be clothed with humility;" and to put on humility is to put on Christ, who, having washed His disciples' feet, said unto them, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John xiii. 15). Do you ask, How can we clothe ourselves with it, since that would imply that we already possess it? The answer is, you *do* possess it if you are Christians at all, but you are to bind it tight upon your persons, and let it cover you from head to foot. This it is possible to do, for, whilst God Himself humbles us by various means, we may humble ourselves, and may be so invested with this grace that the natural pride of our hearts shall be perfectly subdued, and we shall bow before the throne of God like the seraphim who veil their faces with their wings.

It is a rare thing, however, to see a man who is really *clothed* with humility, for such a man will be no egotist, will speak of himself but seldom, and never for his own sake; and will, even if he occupies a high station in society, never look down with contempt on others. Is it uncharitable to say that there is sad lack of true, deep, and sincere humility in the Christian Church? Yet in this grace, as in every other, we must be perfected ere we are meet for the society of heaven. *There* all are clothed with humility, and those are the most humble, if there are any degrees of it there,

who are nearest the throne, and are employed in the noblest work.

2. A reason is assigned by the Apostle—"because God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace unto the humble." He resisteth, or opposeth, the proud. They harden their hearts against Him, as did Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and then he hardens their hearts judicially, to their certain and irremediable destruction. They utter swelling words of vanity against His people and His Church, as did Sennacherib, king of Assyria, and He brings them down into the dust, and sweeps away their armies in which they have made their boast. They glory in the towers and cities they have built, as did Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, who, as he walked in the palace of his kingdom, said, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built?" and He puts them to utter silence, takes away their reason, and drives them from the usual haunts of men. Who ever exalted himself against God and prospered? Kings, and princes, and potentates innumerable, together with men in all other ranks of life, have, through the ages that are past, proudly lifted up their arm in defiance of His power, but where are they now? and to what have they been reduced? God has opposed them all, and their names have either perished or they are remembered only as the tyrants of the human race. As with a mighty army, even the hosts of angels who wait upon His word, He has resisted them and all their forces; and though the prince of the power of the air has been at their head, they

who carry it about with them daily, and whose life is, therefore, not one of sunshine and joy, but one of gloom and sorrow. Care about their circumstances, care about their families, care about their health, or care about their unholy tempers and dispositions, wrinkles their foreheads, and throws a shadow on their path, which men of the world observe, and then say to them very naturally, What is your religion worth?

Now St. Peter, remembering, doubtless, his Lord's words, says to believers, "Cast your anxiety on God," a reminiscence also of the words of David, "Cast thy burden on the Lord and He will sustain thee" (Ps. lv. 22). And had he not St. Paul's words likewise in view: "Be anxious about nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. iv. 6). How precious is this lesson! Observe the force of it: "*all* your anxiety"—not only about the larger, but also about the smaller matters of life, which latter are like the little foxes that spoil the vines of the gardens we have planted. There is nothing too minute to bring to God and to lay with confidence at His feet; for whatever interests you interests Him, and your High Priest and Mediator is "touched with the feeling of your infirmities."

But what is it to cast all our care upon Him, and how is it to be done? It is just to trust Him—our heavenly Father—with ourselves and all our concerns; first to lay all our sins, and then all our sorrows, all our trials, all our wants,

at His feet, and there to leave them with perfect confidence. The whole of our anxiety—our anxiety in its entireness—is to be *rolled*[1] upon the Lord, as the word means; and just as little children bring their troubles to their parents, and, having done this, feel themselves relieved of the burden, so are we to tell God, in believing prayer, all the sorrows of our hearts, resting assured that He will comfort us, and will sustain us in the time of need.

Some *do* thus cast their care upon God, and for awhile are anxious about nothing; but ere long they take back the load, and then it is with them as it was with a Christian lady who thus wrote:—

> A step or two on wingèd feet,
> And then I turned to share
> The burden Thou hads't taken up
> Of ever-pressing care;
> So what I would not leave with Thee
> Of course I had to bear.

Yes, if we will not *leave* the burden with our Lord, as well as roll it *on* Him, we shall have to bear it still; but if we let it alone, not even touching it with our finger, we shall find the promise true of perfect peace and rest.

2. And here is our warrant for the great privilege: "He careth for you." Another word—μέλει—is here used, signifying "to take an interest in any one," which God does in His people to such an extent, that our Lord

[1] ἐπιῤῥίψαντες—casting, or rolling, or throwing upon. The word is only used here and in Luke xix. 35.

declared that the very hairs of their head are all numbered. God's love to us is immeasurable, and for our temporal as well as for our spiritual good He cares so much that we need scarcely care at all. This was the great message brought to us from heaven by His Son. Men did not know it, or they had forgotten it, but Jesus re-asserted it—re-asserted the Fatherhood of God, and said, "Take no thought for your life, no thought for your food, no thought for your raiment; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (Matt. vi. 25-34). "Believers," says Gerhard, "daily ascend Mount Moriah with Abraham, appropriating as their motto the words, 'God will provide' (Gen. xxii. 8). The Lord will provide upon that mountain—that is the mountain of Divine Providence, whence cometh our help" (Ps. cxxiv.).

But do none ever lack food and raiment, and other needful things, who trust in God? Not many, if their confidence is full and abiding. For the trial of their faith they may sometimes be brought into great straits, but if they make no attempt to help Providence by questionable plans and devices of their own, *their* extremity will be the hour of God's interference, and "JEHOVAH JIREH" will still be their song. Yes, beloved, God careth for you; and whilst you must be diligent in business, and by no means improvident of your supplies however full; and whilst you may make due provision for sickness and for age, and may lay down the best plans you can for the future welfare of your

children, you may at the same time rest on the assurances which God gives you of His paternal love, and trust Him to sustain you to the end of your days.

A most precious result will follow, implied by St. Peter if not expressed, but which St. Paul expresses in his own beautiful manner: "And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv. 7, cf. Isa. xxvi. 5). Perfect peace is the reward of perfect trust. When our cares are cast on God He takes them, and they are no longer ours, and thus we possess a sweet and blessed rest even in the midst of all the turmoils of the world. Like the lake that is agitated on the surface, but beneath is undisturbed, so the mind of the believer who fully trusts in God may for awhile be partially disturbed, but the disturbance will not be deep, and ere long he will return to his placid rest again. Oh, would that Christians knew how restful they might be, for thus would Christ be glorified by their calm demeanour; and the world, seeing them live above the worry of business and the cares of life, would be constrained to acknowledge the reality of their religion.

THOUGHTS OF OTHER MINDS.

Ver. 5, 6. **Make no reflex act upon thy own humility, nor upon any other grace with which God hath enriched thy soul; for since God oftentimes hides from his saints and servants the sight of those excellent things by which they shine to others (though the dark side of the lantern be towards themselves), that he may secure the grace of**

humility, it is good that thou do so thyself; and if thou beholdest a grace of God in thee, remember to give him thanks for it, that thou mayst not boast in that which is none of thy own; and consider how thou hast sullied it by handling it with thy dirty fingers, with thy own imperfections, and with mixture of unhandsome circumstances.—BISHOP JEREMY TAYLOR.

Ver. 6. There are three properties in humbleness, which show that it conduceth much to uprightness. One is that *it is much with God.* Hence we read of the cries of the humble, and the desires of the heart. The humble soul is like the weak ivy which clings about the strong oak, so it is much with the mighty God. You shall seldom find the humble person with a tear in his eye, a complaint on his tongue, a prayer in his heart. Either you find him upon his feet standing to hear what God will say, or upon his knees craving what God will give. Another, that *it hath much from God.* There be high mountains which are above all clouds. The proud heart is most empty, because most lofty, but God gives grace unto the humble (James i. 4). The poor beggar gets the alms and the low valley gets the showers, and the humble heart the grace of God. A third that *it doth all for God.* There are two things which the humble person doth most eye. One is God's will, the other is God's glory: all is from Him and by Him, and, therefore, all must be for Him, saith the humble heart.—SEDGWICK.

Ver. 7. *Watch.* There is a Christian rule to be observed in the very moderating of bodily sleep, and that particularly for the interest of prayer; but watching, as well as sobriety, implies here chiefly the spiritual circumspectness and vigilance of the mind, in a wary watching posture, that it be not surprised by the assaults of Satan, by the world, nor by its nearest and most deceiving enemy, the corruption which dwells within; which being so near, doth most readily watch unperceived advantages, and easily circumvent us. The soul of a Christian being surrounded with enemies, both of so great power and wrath, and so watchful to undo it, should it not be watchful for its own safety, and live in a military vigilance continually, keeping constant watch and sentinel, and suffering nothing to pass that may carry the least suspicion of danger?—LEIGHTON.

Ver. 7. If God care for us, we are well enough. He is infinite in power, therefore nothing is impossible to Him—nothing can hinder

Him; He is infinite in love and mercy, therefore ready enough to do us good; so in wisdom, therefore knows what we need and is good for us. It is not so with the children of any earthly parents, for they sometimes would care and do for them but cannot. Some can and will not; some both can and would, if they knew, but through distance of place and such like lets (hindrances), they know not their state.—ROGERS.

Ver. 7. Surely when God says, I would have you without carefulness, that you may serve me without fear in holiness and righteousness all the days of your lives, the sense of His kindness and the desire of His glory should equally lead us to comply with the command, "Cast all your care on God." Indeed, wherever the proposition, God the infinitely powerful, wise, and benignant Sovereign of the universe cares for me, is interested in my welfare, and pledges to secure it, is understood and believed, in the degree in which it is understood and believed, it does, it must banish carefulness and anxiety from the mind. Here, as in so many other cases, it is with a man according to his faith. Oh, how happy, oh, how holy would we be! how easy would labour be, how light affliction! could we but, believing that God cares for us, "cast all our care on Him," saying, "I am poor and needy, but the Lord thinketh on me! Thou art my help and deliverer, O my God!"—Dr. J. BROWN.

XXI.

WARNING AND ENCOURAGEMENT.

"*Be sober, be vigilant; your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are being accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, will make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle (you). To whom be the might for ever. Amen.*"—(*Chap.* v., *ver.* 8-11.)

FREEDOM from care does not mean either stoicism or apathy. A soldier may have perfect confidence in his commander, and may follow him into the battle-field with little anxiety as to the result; but he does not, therefore, leave behind him his sword, or think that he himself will have no need to fight. Nor must the Christian, however firm his reliance on the Captain of his salvation, suppose that he has nothing to do but gently move with the crowd. He is yet in the militant Church, and here he must put on the whole panoply of God, and be ready to meet the foes who will certainly assail him.

It is almost self-evident that the Apostle, in the words which now follow, had in remembrance those of his Lord—"Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren" (Luke xxii. 31, 32). *That* was a

word of warning and encouragement, and so, also, is this; and here, especially, does St. Peter strengthen his brethren and the whole Church of Christ as only one can who has himself been assailed by the adversary, and has overcome. Observe—

I. THE ADMONITION. 1. In its nature it is twofold: Be sober; be vigilant. These are military terms, and they necessarily go together. To be sober is to be calm, self-possessed, and always ready for the battle-field when the trumpet calls to war. He is sober who avoids everything that would intoxicate either his body or his mind, for, as a drunken soldier cannot be a good sentinel, neither can a Christian be prepared for the sudden attacks of his foe who is carried away with undue excitement, or permits himself to be thrown off his guard by any kind of sensual gratification, or even by merely secular pursuits. We must be temperate in all things, in the use of food, in the enjoyment of our animal passions, and in our efforts to obtain the good things of this life (Luke xxi. 34; Thess. v. 6-8). But a sober mind is as essential as a sober body. Some are "puffed up" with extravagant notions of their own abilities, and with high expectations of their own achievements. We must learn not to think of ourselves "more highly than we ought to think; but to think soberly according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Rom. xii. 3). We should not then trust in our own strength, or rely upon our own skill, but on the power of Christ alone, even as

soldiers whose confidence is not in themselves, but in the skill and wisdom of their tried commander.

But *vigilance* is also needful; the vigilance of faith, of love, of hope, and of action, which consists not in watching ourselves, as Peter began to do when he attempted to walk upon the waters, but in watching our adversaries lest they should come upon us unawares, and in watching Christ the Captain of our salvation, who stands ready to lead us to battle and to victory. It has been said that the vigilance of faith is more than the courage of faith, and more than the rest of faith, for it is steadfastness of faith, the opposite of an intermittent faith, or of looking sometimes to Jesus and sometimes to self and circumstances. Yes; we must be steadily watchful, whilst we are at the same time calm and confident. "Be strong and of good courage," said God to Joshua; "be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed," but why? "for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Josh. i. 9).

2. The necessity of this is founded on the fact that we have a vigilant foe to deal with. "Because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." There is, however, no word corresponding to the word *because* in the original, and its omission makes the appeal more forcible. No human adversary is referred to here, as some assert who would deny the personality of the devil. That there should be such a being as the devil is a mysterious fact; but a fact it is, so clearly revealed in

the sacred Scriptures that to get rid of it we must either deny their truth, or have recourse to a system of interpretation which would explain more than half of them away. And, after all, is it much more mysterious than that there should be wicked men—such wicked men as Herod the Great, and Nero, and Alva? The existence of sin cannot be denied, and the Bible tells us that it did not originate with man, but with the angels who kept not their first estate, and whose prince or chief was the devil, or Satan (2 Pet. ii. 4; Jude 6). He was permitted to tempt our first parents in Paradise, and now he is permitted to walk about, or to go to and fro in the earth, probably with great rapidity, seeking personally or by his agents, whose name is legion, those whom he may entrap and devour. He is compared to *a wolf* for his greediness, to *a serpent* for his wiliness, and to *a lion* for his cruelty and strength. The lion roars when he is hungry, and his roar is heard for miles, and strikes terror into all the beasts of the field. Our great adversary longs for prey. He is never satisfied. He would scatter and destroy all the sheep of Christ's flock. He never sleeps, but is always on the alert to seize on the unwary, and, as the word means, to gulp or swallow them down.[1] The sober and the vigilant he *may not, cannot, dare not injure,* for they are under the protection of their Shepherd-King; yet even they are liable to his attacks,

[1] καταπίνειν, to drink greedily, or swallow down. (Cf. 1 Cor. xv. 54; Heb. xi. 29; Rev. xii. 16).

and must never, therefore, cease to watch. If found one moment from their guide, the foe might fall upon them and make them his prey, even as he had nearly made Peter, who first followed his Lord afar off, and then denied Him with oaths and curses.[1]

3. In what manner, then, must we exercise these virtues, or how must we meet this subtle foe? "Whom resist,"[2] says the Apostle, "firm," or "steadfast in the faith." With such an enemy there must be no parleying. We are not ignorant of his devices. Just as the spider weaves the subtle web around the unsuspecting fly, will Satan try to entangle us by his stratagems, and to take us captives, ere we are aware. True; he is not ubiquitous, but his agents are innumerable, for whilst there is but one *devil*,[3] there are thousands of *demons*, and they are employed by their

[1] See on this whole subject the admirable discourse of John Smith, of Cambridge, on "A Christian's Conflicts and Conquests," from which I have given a short extract at the end.

[2] ἀντίστητε. Cf. James iv. 7, and Prov. xiii. 3.

[3] The word "devil"—διάβολος—occurs in the New Test. nearly forty times, but only in the plural in these passages, 1 Tim. iii. 11; 2 Tim. iii. 3; Luke ii. 3, where it is applied to men, and means slanderers or calumniators, which, indeed, is the general import of the name. The word "demons"—δαιμόνια—occurs still more frequently, but seldom in the singular, and always refers to evil spirits, which some think may be those of wicked men, but this is doubtful. That Satan ever dwelt in heaven there is no Scriptural proof, for Rev. xii. 9 refers to Christian times. Nor is there any proof that he is such a being as poets have described him—intellect without God. He is great in nothing but sin, malice, and wickedness.

leader in this attempt to destroy the elect of God. "Put on," says St. Paul, "the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the stratagems of the devil; because our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but it is against Principalities, against Powers, against the Worldly Rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly *regions*."[1] There must, then, be firm, manly, and determined resistance. Not only is vigilance needful, lest we should be caught in the fowler's net, but the use of the whole armour of God is necessary, and specially the sword and the shield—the sword which is the word of God, and the shield, which is faith in the presence and power of our Captain; that, in the hand-to-hand struggle which will sometimes ensue, we may not be cast down and overcome.

"Fight the good fight of faith," says St. Paul to Timothy. It is a fight *for* faith, that we may maintain our personal trust in Christ unto the end; it is a fight *in* faith, for only when in possession of it can we contend for it aright; and it is a fight *by* faith, that being one of the chief weapons we must use—the shield of faith, in the ready employment of which we can alone avoid being surprised and conquered.

And there is encouragement for us in this warfare. It is the warfare of all believers. It is not peculiar to us, for it is the universal lot of Christians, who in all ages have been

[1] Ephes. vi. 11, 14. Bp. Ellicott's Translation.

called to wage it, but in all ages have obtained the victory. "Knowing," says the Apostle, "that the self-same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." This conflict with the powers of darkness is one in which all advanced believers are engaged. Once they warred with flesh and blood, with their own evil passions and propensities, and though these may not yet be entirely subdued, yet they are kept under by the sanctifying grace of God; and the enemies they have now to meet are external chiefly, and with these they must do battle even to the end. But need they fear? No; their faith unites them to Christ, and he fights for them, and therefore they must always win. The lion of the tribe of Judah is mightier than the lion of the tribes of hell, and has already gained over him a glorious victory, whilst the day is coming when he will be utterly cast down and destroyed. "Unbelievers," says one, "fear the devil as a lion; the strong in faith despise him as a worm." Conflict, however, you will have, and for conflict you must be prepared; but defeat you need never suffer, for if you resist the devil, who is after all a coward, he will flee from you.

The more firmly we stand against temptation, the less we shall be tempted, for when Satan sees that we are resolved to maintain our ground he will leave us masters of the field. The commander of an army plants his batteries against a fortress and threatens its destruction. But, ere long, he finds that it is stronger than he supposed, and that

its occupants are not afraid of him, nor disposed to surrender to his bold demands. What then? He raises the siege, and leaves that fortress, thinking that it is useless to spend his strength against it. Resist the attacks of Satan, and Satan will give up the conflict.

For the Christian, though tempted, need not give way to the temptation. There is a state of grace attainable even in this life, in which, though the subject of temptation attended by long and very severe conflict, the believer may never yield to it, but, in the midst of the severest onslaughts of the foe, obtain the victory. Many, however, are unable to distinguish between the one and the other, between temptation and yielding to temptation, and especially in respect to evil thoughts. How are we to know, they ask, whether an evil thought arises from our own minds, or whether it is insinuated by an outward foe? and how are we to tell when, if it comes from without, it becomes sinful in us and displeasing in the sight of God? The answer is that in a truly sanctified mind evil thoughts will arise, but will be instantly repelled as they were by Christ our Lord; and that no evil thought, however vile it may be, becomes sin in us unless we think upon it with pleasure and conceive a wish or a desire to carry it into practice. "Every man is tempted," and yields to the temptation, "when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed" (James i. 24); but let him, when the temptation or the evil suggestion comes, say instantly and resolutely, "Get thee behind me,

Satan!" and the victory is sure. If you would stand in the evil day, if you would be kept from falling, if you would more than conquer—be sober, be vigilant, and, above all, rest by faith in the all-sufficiency of Christ, and temptation cannot injure you however fierce and terrible it may be.

But, to return to the Apostle's words, here is your encouragement, "the very same sufferings are being accomplished" by the will or appointment of God, by all "the brotherhood" of Christians who are still "in the world." They are filling up,[1] as it were, the measure of affliction which must be endured ere the end comes; and we must be willing to take our part with them; and, in the spirit of holy heroism, endure unto the end. Mark, then:

II. THE PROMISE. In our version, verse 10 is a prayer; but, more correctly rendered, it is a declaration or promise, and as such we shall consider it.

1. God stands to His people as the God of all grace. Of grace in its manifold forms and aspects—the grace which pardons, renovates, sanctifies, strengthens, and keeps—He is the origin and source. From God, through Christ, we receive "grace for grace," grace in its richest measures; more and yet more "abundant grace," for whilst there are differences of operations in the Church, and diversities of gifts, it is "the same God that worketh all in all."

His grace was specially displayed in our call in Christ

[1] ἐπιτελεῖσθαι. Cf. Phil. i. 6; Heb. viii. 5, ix. 6.

Jesus to His eternal glory. We were called to repentance, called to the exercise of faith, called to holiness of heart; but the ultimate design of the call was to His eternal glory, for "whom He called them He also justified, and whom He justified them He also glorified." What can this expression mean? "*His eternal glory.*" It is beyond our comprehension, but we know that there is in reserve for God's suffering people a far more exceeding and eternal weight of blessedness. In the future state we shall behold the Divine glory in the person of Jesus Christ, and the sight of it will assimilate our nature to itself so that we shall become ourselves more and more glorious through the cycles of eternity.

> "These eyes, that, dazzled now and weak,
> At glancing motes in sunshine wink,
> Shall see the King's full glory break,
> Nor from the blissful vision shrink;
> In fearless love and hope uncloyed
> For ever on that ocean bright
> Empower'd to gaze; and undestroy'd,
> Deeper and deeper plunge in light."

To this glory we are already called *in* Christ Jesus, for He is the very element in which our calling took place, and only as we abide in Him can that calling become effectual at the last.

2. But there is a condition: "when you have suffered a little while," for these words belong to the preceding clause, and mean that this glory will be ours after we have sustained our measure of trial, for "if we suffer with Him we

shall also reign." This is the natural order; but observe the contrast—a few years of suffering, but then everlasting glory. "For I reckon," says St. Paul, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18). Do we shrink from suffering? Many Christians do. They shrink from physical pain, and they shrink from mental conflict. It is not surprising, for neither of them are easy to bear. Our bodies are exquisitely sensitive, and some there are whose nerves are so finely strung that physical pain causes them intolerable anguish; and yet how many such, in times of persecution, have endured the greatest tortures with composure, nay, even with exulting joy. "It will soon be over," they have said, as they went to the arena or the stake; and the prospect of eternal glory nerved them with supernatural strength. More difficult to bear is mental conflict, and there are times in which, upon some Christians, a horror of great darkness falls, as upon Abraham, the friend of God (Gen. xv. 12). I know nothing to be dreaded more than this; yet this can be but for a little while, even as our Saviour's agony in the garden was; and, ere long, an angel from heaven strengthened Him, and He rose up with confidence to meet His foes (Luke xxii. 42, 44). But I could never pray in the language of the poet:—

> "Give me to feel Thine agony,
> One drop of Thy sad cup afford."

A drop, or more, of Christ's *physical* sufferings most of His

people are called, perhaps, to sustain, at one time or another; but His *mental* anguish,—who could sustain that? If God *sends* mental suffering, He will be with us in it; but I dare pray for it not, lest I should sink beneath its weight. The cup of our Lord was an exceeding bitter cup, too bitter for any mere man to taste, and, therefore, we should rather pray that no drop of it should be mixed with ours. The bitterest ingredient in that cup was the fear of being deserted by His Father in the final hour, which, for a moment, He all but experienced in the garden and on the cross, but was heard in that He feared. And this, of all possible sufferings, is, to many, the most appalling, and the one from which they most shrink.

Still, the deepest mental sorrow we can be called to endure will be but for a little while; for, however God may seem to hide from us His countenance, He cannot leave us while we cling to Him, and never will He lay upon any of His people a burden greater than they can bear.

3. And what is the promise? "After ye have suffered awhile He shall make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you," "He Himself" is the emphatic language of the Apostle here; for from the same fountain of grace as the call to eternal glory came, will come all the gifts essential to its attainment.

He will *perfect* you. The believer is at first, and for awhile, very deficient in many respects—in wisdom, prudence, charity, patience, and all other virtues of the Chris-

tian character. Must those defects remain in him? and must he carry them to the grave? No; ere he enters the "eternal glory" he must be blameless, harmless, and without rebuke, and therefore made perfect in every good word and work. He cannot, however, make himself perfect. God must do it; and He will do it, never leaving his servant until He has done for him all that He has promised (Gen. xxviii. 15).

He will *stablish* you, or make you fast. "He set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings," said David, and Jesus said to Peter, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." There are Christians who, when the storm sets in, are like trees which wave to and fro in the wind, and which, having but a slender hold of the soil, are in danger of being blown down; but God can give them such support that they shall be like majestic oaks that defy the fiercest blast, or like a lighthouse on a rock that stands unmoved amid the billows of the raging sea.

He will *strengthen* you. For ordinary warfare bodily strength is necessary, for the warfare in which the Christian is engaged spiritual strength is essential. A feeble, timid Christian will fly before the enemy, but one who is strong in the Lord and in the power of His might will go and meet him with all confidence. And God gives strength to His people. They are strengthened with might by His spirit in the inner man, and when temptation comes they are able to resist it, and in every conflict they come off victorious.

He will *settle* you. This word—θεμελιώσαι—means He will ground, or fix you, as on a sure foundation, so that, like a mighty fortress, you shall stand unmoved even though assailed by hosts of foes. A precious promise this; for our enemies sometimes come upon us like an army set in array, threatening to storm a citadel and to take possession of it by force. But our citadel will prove too strong for them, and they shall be driven back, like the armies of Sennacherib when they threatened to invade the Holy City.

In these several words there is a striking rise and development. The believer's character is first perfected, then he becomes firm in the faith; he is then strengthened to endure the assaults of the foe, and then he becomes settled or made fast, and is as a tower of strength which none of his enemies can shake.

4. A doxology of praise closes the paragraph. *To Him* is again emphatic, and the meaning is, to Him be ascribed the glory and the might for ever, or, as some critics read, *the might*, the word *glory* being considered unauthentic. None of the credit of our salvation belongs to us. The excellency of the power is not of man but of God, and to Him, therefore, must all the honour and glory be ascribed. We are saved by grace through faith, but the faith itself is a Divine gift, and the praise of every virtuous thought, and of every righteous word and act, belongs only to God. And He *will* have it; for He has said, "My glory will I not give to another." The moment we begin to

attribute to ourselves the victories we win we dishonour God, and then, it may be, He will leave us to ourselves, and teach us, by sad experience, how little we can do, and how soon our strength is gone. O give glory to God alone for all that He has done for you, and then shall you take part in that song of praise which fills the courts above!

THOUGHTS OF OTHER MINDS.

Ver. 9. When a man's heart is at peace in God, and is become truly full in that peace and joy passing understanding, then the devil hath not that hope to prevail against his soul as he had before. He knows right well that it is in vain to bait his hook with profits, pleasures, honour, or any such like seeming good, to catch such a soul that is thus at quiet in God; for he hath all fulness in God, and what can be added to fulness, but it runneth over? Indeed, empty hearts, like empty hogsheads, are fit to receive any matter which shall be put into them. But the heart of the believer, being filled with joy and peace in believing, doth abhor all such base allurements, for that it hath no room in itself to receive any such seeming contentments.—FISHER. 1726.

Ver. 8. Sobriety is a moderation and right use of our lawful liberties which are given us of God, not to be used as we will, but as may stand with these three main ends—the glory of God, our own good, and the salvation of our brethren. Watchfulness is a diligent and continual looking to ourselves, that both in thought, word, and deed we may resist evil, and do the good we ought. This is the work only of a good Christian, who, being awakened out of his sins, hath obtained the pardon of them, and assurance thereof, and, therefore, hath set his heart to lead a godly life, and to please God in all things. It is requisite, then, that a man be awakened before he can watch, as we bid not a man fast asleep look to this or that, but first to wake, and then to look to it; we bid not a man that is down run, but first to get up on his feet, and then run.—ROGERS.

Ver. 8. Satan is a lion, not a lamb; a roaring lion, not a sleepy lion; not a lion standing still, but a lion going up and down. As not

being contented with the prey, the many millions of souls he hath got, "he seeks whom he may sip up at a draught," as the word imports; his greatest design is to fill hell with souls, which should awaken everyone to be active, and to do all that may be done to prevent his design, and to help forward the salvation of souls.—BROOKS.

Ver. 9. Christ came to destroy the works of the devil in us, but yet He makes us kings under Him, to fight His battles, and as by His Spirit in us He destroys the works of the devil, so He doth it in the exercise of all the powers and parts of soul and body, and by exercising the graces of His Spirit in us. "He hath made us kings and priests," not that we should do nothing, but that we should fight, and in fighting overcome. The chiefest grace that God doth exercise in overcoming our corruptions is faith. We fell by infidelity and disobedience. Now, Christ comes and displants infidelity, and instead thereof He plants faith, which unites us to Him, and then, by a Divine skill, it draws a particular strength from Christ, to fight His battles against corruptions. —SIBBES.

Ver. 9, 10. As he who projects wickedness shall be sure to find Satan standing at his right hand, ready to assist him in it; so he that pursues after God and holiness shall find God nearer to him than he is to himself, in the free and liberal communications of Himself to him. He that goes out in God's battles fighting under our Saviour's banner, may look upwards, and, opening his eyes, may see the mountains full of horses and chariots of fire round about him. God hath not so much delight in the death and destruction of men as to see them struggling and contending for life, and Himself stand by as a looker on. No; but with the most tender and fatherly compassions His bowels yearn over them, and His almighty arm is stretched forth for them, and in His strength they shall prevail; they shall be borne up, as upon eagles' wings; they shall walk in the might of His strength who is able to save, and not faint. Where there is any serious and sober resolution against sin, any real motion towards God, there is the blessing of heaven in it; He that planteth it will also water it, and make it to bud, and blossom, and bring forth fruit.—JOHN SMITH. 1623.

XXII.

THE CONCLUSION.

"By Silvanus, the faithful brother, as I suppose, I have written to you in few words, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God; wherein stand ye. The (Church) which is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you, and (so doth) Marcus my son. Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be to you all that are in Christ. Amen"—(*Chap.* v. 12-14).

In epistolary correspondence to acquaintances and friends it is usual both to commence and close with a few kind words. This was St. Paul's method, and it was also that of his illustrious fellow-workers. They were men of tender feelings, and in genuine sympathy with the Churches they addressed, and through the Epistle which here closes there runs a vein of tenderness which indicates that the once rough and ready fisherman of Galilee had ripened into a Christian whose heart was full of love.

There is much more in the words now before us to instruct and edify than, perhaps, we are disposed to think. They are not mere complimentary words. They mean something. They contain some beautiful lessons which we shall do well to make our own.

I. St. Peter tells the Churches HOW HE HAD WRITTEN TO THEM.

1. He had written by Silvanus, the faithful brother. Whether this means that he had employed Silvanus as his

amanuensis does not appear, but that he was the bearer of the letter to the Churches is certainly implied. And who was Silvanus? There is little doubt, if any, that he was the person known in the Acts by the name of Silas. That name is derived from the Latin *silva*—"a wood," which indicates that he was a Hellenist, whilst from Acts xvi. 38 we gather that he was a Roman citizen. He first appears in Acts xv. 22, where he is called one of the "chief men among the brethren," and is sent with Paul and Barnabas from the Church at Jerusalem, to the Churches in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. He returned to Jerusalem with the Apostles (ver. 33),[1] and some time later went back to Antioch, where he was selected by St. Paul as his companion in his second missionary journey (ver. 40, 41). At Berea he was left behind with Timothy, whilst St. Paul went to Athens (Acts xvii. 14). They two rejoined the Apostle at Corinth (Acts xviii. 5), where Silas preached the Gospel, probably with considerable power (2 Cor. i. 19). But from this time the connection between him and St. Paul appears to have terminated. He was, however, "a faithful brother," and now we find him with St. Peter at Babylon, whither he had come, perhaps on a missionary tour, but with a special desire to confer with that Apostle. The journey from Palestine to that city was often taken in those days, and the facilities for travelling were somewhat easy. Was St. Paul, when a prisoner in Rome, cheered by

[1] Ver. 34 of this chapter is spurious.

the visit of a friend? St. Peter in Babylon, though not a prisoner, would also be, for the friendships of the early Christians were often very deep and lasting. When St. Peter calls him "the faithful brother, *as I suppose*," he does not express the slightest doubt of the fact, but adds his own testimony, from what he had seen of Silvanus, to the knowledge which these Churches had of him themselves. It was a high commendation, but it was well deserved. O that every Christian, and especially every Christian minister, were worthy of it, for only to faithful brethren will the crown be awarded in the last day (Rev. ii. 10).

2. The Apostle had written in few words, for his epistle was comparatively brief, and perhaps other words were sent by Silvanus to be communicated by oral teaching; but the object of the Epistle was to exhort them to Christian steadfastness, and to bear his testimony to "the true grace" which God had given them in the covenant of the Gospel. This that I have written to you, he says, is my testimony to that grace. I know its power; I realise its blessedness; I unfold its privileges. It is the true grace of God—the grace which He has manifested to me and to you in Christ Jesus His Son, and which fills us with peace, and joy, and hope. There is no other grace which saves but that which is revealed to us in the Gospel. In nature and in providence we have innumerable proofs of God's goodwill to man, but it is only through His Son that He bestows the

grace which prepares us for eternal life. And of this grace we are bound to testify. Each Christian is called to bear his testimony to its truth, and in doing so he both glorifies God and strengthens his own faith and hope.

"Stand ye," then adds the Apostle, "in this grace," for such is the true meaning here; and thus he exhorts them to Christian fidelity, implying, as he had done before, that upon this the final issues hung. "Stand ye.[1]" The exhortation is for all. Are we *in* the true grace of God? It is a fortress in which we are perfectly safe; but we must not quit it, we must not leave it. Not for one moment must we step beyond its walls, lest the enemy, ever vigilant and nigh, should claim us as his hapless prey.

II. The Apostle sends to them CHRISTIAN GREETINGS. 1. From the Church at Babylon. By this place some suppose a town of that name situated in Egypt is meant, but for this opinion there is the most slender evidence. Others, and especially Roman Catholic writers, maintain that the Apostle was now at Rome, and that he called that city Babylon, an opinion which they cling to as a forlorn hope, for want of other evidence from the New Testament that St. Peter was bishop of Rome.[2] There is not the slightest

[1] On every account, says Alford, we are bound to read στῆτε not ἑστήκατε.

[2] The Roman Catholic Church affirms that Peter was Bishop or Pope of Rome twenty-five years, whereas there is not a tittle of evidence in the New Test. that he ever was in Rome at all. On this subject I refer the reader to the report of a discussion held in Rome, Feb. 9th and 10th,

doubt that this Babylon was the city which stood on the banks of the Euphrates, where at that time a large number of Jews resided, so that the king of the Parthians[1] granted them a high priest, and they observed the forms of the Mosaic ritual. Here was a Christian Church over which St. Peter now presided, and from this Church he sent, doubtless at the request of its members, friendly greetings to the Churches of the West. Some read here "she that is at Babylon greeteth you," and suppose that the wife of Peter is meant; but there is little doubt that the true reading is "the Church,"[2] which the Apostle speaks of as "elected together with you;" or as "the co-elect" of other Churches; partaking with them of the same grace, and heirs of the same eternal blessedness.

It has been recently observed that the election to eternal salvation is always predicated of the Church, or of believers collectively; and that, therefore, the doctrine should always be stated with application to a plural, not a singular number. When an individual is said to be

1872, translated from the Italian by the Rev. W. Arthur, M.A. Few can read that report with an unprejudiced mind without arriving at the conclusion that the Romanists, able men as they were, failed to prove their point. They had nothing to rest upon but tradition.

[1] There were Jews, or proselytes from Parthia, in which region Babylon was situated, present at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 9). Were some of them the means of carrying the Gospel to that city, and did St. Peter meet there some whom he had met on that memorable day?

[2] This is the reading of the recently discovered Codex Sin.

chosen of God, it is to a special office or work. It is the Church which is chosen to everlasting life. Of this fact we have an illustration here. These Churches were elected to eternal life as Churches, and the individual members of them to the privileges of membership, on their improvement of which their final salvation hung. So is it ever. There is no favouritism with heaven; and personal faith and holiness are always essential to everlasting blessedness.

Christian Churches in different localities often greet one another now; but alas! the spirit of sectarianism prevents it in many cases, and questions respecting episcopacy and presbyterianism have raised barriers so lofty that one Church leaves another to the uncovenanted mercies of God. When shall the end of these things come? Lord, hasten it in thine own time!

2. From Mark, the Apostle's son in the faith, a greeting is also sent. Marcus was the John Mark who wrote the second Gospel and of whom we read in the Acts of the Apostles. He was Peter's son in the same sense as Timothy was St. Paul's (1 Tim. i. 2), for he had begotten him in the faith, and had introduced him into the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. His mother's name was Mary, whose residence was in Jerusalem, where probably Peter found him on his escape from the prison, on which occasion he was perhaps led to embrace the truth (Acts xii. 12). The release of the Apostle would doubtless make a deep impression on the young man's mind, and that night, as we may well

suppose, was the night of his decision for God. He became the companion of Barnabas and Saul (Acts xii. 25), but not being sufficiently firm in the faith to brave the difficulties of the mission, he left them and went home (ch. xiii. 13). At a little later period Barnabas, who was his uncle, wished to take him on their second journey, but Paul demurred, and a contention ensued, so that Paul chose Silas, and Barnabas Mark, and the former went through Syria and Cilicia, whilst the latter sailed for Cyprus (ch. xv. 36-41).

He was, however, reconciled to Paul whom he visited in Rome (Col. iv. 10), whence he proceeded to Asia Minor, in which Colosse was situated, and thence, as we may conjecture, to Babylon, where he joined Peter. What a precious meeting that would be! Was it now that he obtained from Peter the materials for his Gospel? or did he now pen that Gospel under Peter's eye? This is highly probable, but whether or not, he was now an established Christian, and doubtless full of zeal and ardour in the service of his Lord. At his own request Peter sent *his* greetings also to the Churches, but separately from those of the Church at Babylon, as he was not a member of that Church but a visitor only, and for a little while.

For where afterwards is he found? At Ephesus, with Timothy, whom, in all probability, he accompanied to Rome to visit St. Paul in his second imprisonment, and but a little while before his martyrdom (2 Tim. iv. 11). Tradition says that he afterwards became the Bishop of Alexandria.

Let Christians send their greetings to their friends who are distant from them, as often as they can. We live in a day in which there is postal communication with every part of the world, and letter writing is now a daily practice with most people. Let your letters speak of Christ, testify for Christ, and honour Christ; and in every one you write let there be a note of real Christian love which shall assure your friend that the bond between you is as strong as ever.

III. Further, the Apostle bids these Christians to GREET ONE ANOTHER WITH A HOLY KISS.

The kiss upon the lips or upon the cheek was the usual mode of salutation among the Jews from the very earliest times; and the early Christians thus saluted one another as a sign of their mutual love. The fraternal kiss was given to the newly baptised, and just before the celebration of the Lord's Supper every Christian thus saluted his brother. Nor was this an empty form, but an expression of deep and hallowed emotion, at which the heathen often wondered. St. Peter, then, would have the brethren of these Churches thus to show their mutual regard one for another, and says to them, therefore, "Greet one another with a kiss of charity."

Of *charity*, or *love;* for there were formal salutations which meant nothing, and even treacherous greetings, which sprang from the worst designs. Men there are who say "peace" to their neighbour when mischief is in their hearts, and who, like Joab or like Judas, will speak quietly

to one, or even imprint a kiss upon his cheek, whom at the moment they intend to injure. In whatever form we salute one another let us be honest and sincere; and let us cultivate, as Christians, that true courtesy which is not sparing of salutations, but will shake by the hand, with a warm and loving heart, all who bear the name of our Master, to whatever country they belong, or however poor their lot. Christian charity will greet the lowliest of the followers of Jesus as soon, and as sincerely, as it will greet the richest; and this is one proof of the genuineness of our love, when it has no respect of persons, but embraces all believers of whatever name.

PEACE BE WITH YOU ALL THAT ARE IN CHRIST, is the Apostle's closing words. He asks for them the peace which flows from grace, but which is realised only by those that are in Christ (1 Cor. i. 3; Phil. i. 2; Col. i. 2). He is the fountain of all peace, for He is our peacemaker, through whom alone we can be at peace with God, with ourselves, and with our fellow-men. The great objects of this Epistle were to strengthen the faith and to confirm the hope of these elect strangers, and the Apostle indicates by these closing words his earnest wish that these objects might be accomplished. But it is more than a wish—it is a prayer—a prayer for their continued peace and prosperity in every possible sense, and thus his fraternal heart pours forth a fountain of genuine love; and to all that he has written he affixes his Amen.

And here we close our exposition of this remarkable Epistle. It is like an orchard stocked with fruit trees, and as we have gone through it and shaken their branches, fruit of the richest kind has dropped into our lap. But we have left behind much more than we have gained, and others doubtless will come after us and find abundant fruitage still. I commend to you this precious portion of inspired truth, by which Peter strengthened his brethren in his own days, and by which he is strengthening, and will strengthen others to the end of time. Study it for yourselves, beloved, and with this great Apostle we say, "Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus." Amen.

THOUGHTS OF OTHER MINDS.

Ver. 13. In all the Scripture, you cannot find Peter nearer Rome than in the town of Joppa; and our Protestant writers have made it as plain as the sun at noonday, that he was never there. Therefore, it is a stupendous thing to think how this conceit hath invaded the world, and got so high a seat in the hearts of men, and among the articles of religion.—DR. J. LIGHTFOOT. 1652.

Ver. 13. The company of the faithful that were at Babylon, knowing of our Apostle's writing to these his dispersed brethren, entreat to be remembered to them, and pray the Apostle (for he would not send their commendations without their knowledge) that he would signify to them that they remembered them, were glad of them, praying to God for them. God's people, though far distant one from another, yet must be mindful one of another.—ROGERS.

Ver. 13. *A Church at Babylon.*—How doth grace abound, where sin abounded! At Babel was the confusion of tongues—at Babel was the beginning of heathenism—there was idolatry practised in its height; and from Babel proceeded a continual persecution of God's Church of

the Jews; and yet now there is a Church. How was that fulfilled? In Psal. lxxxvii. 4: "I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me." To which also that is consonant in Isa. xix. 23: "In that day there shall be a highway out of Egypt into Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians." God has delighted to set up monuments of His grace for encouragement of sinners to come in to him; and that both in places and persons.—DR. J. LIGHTFOOT.

Ver. 14. A kiss of charity is equivalent to a kiss not of mere form, but expressive of real Christian affection. But though the external *mode* of expressing Christian love be a matter of comparative unimportance, the importance of cherishing this affection, ay, and of expressing it too, cannot be exaggerated.—Dr. J. BROWN.

Ver. 14. This peace that is the portion of those in Christ is indeed within them, and with God. But through Him it is likewise *one with another*, and in that notion it is to be desired and wished jointly with the other.—LEIGHTON.

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